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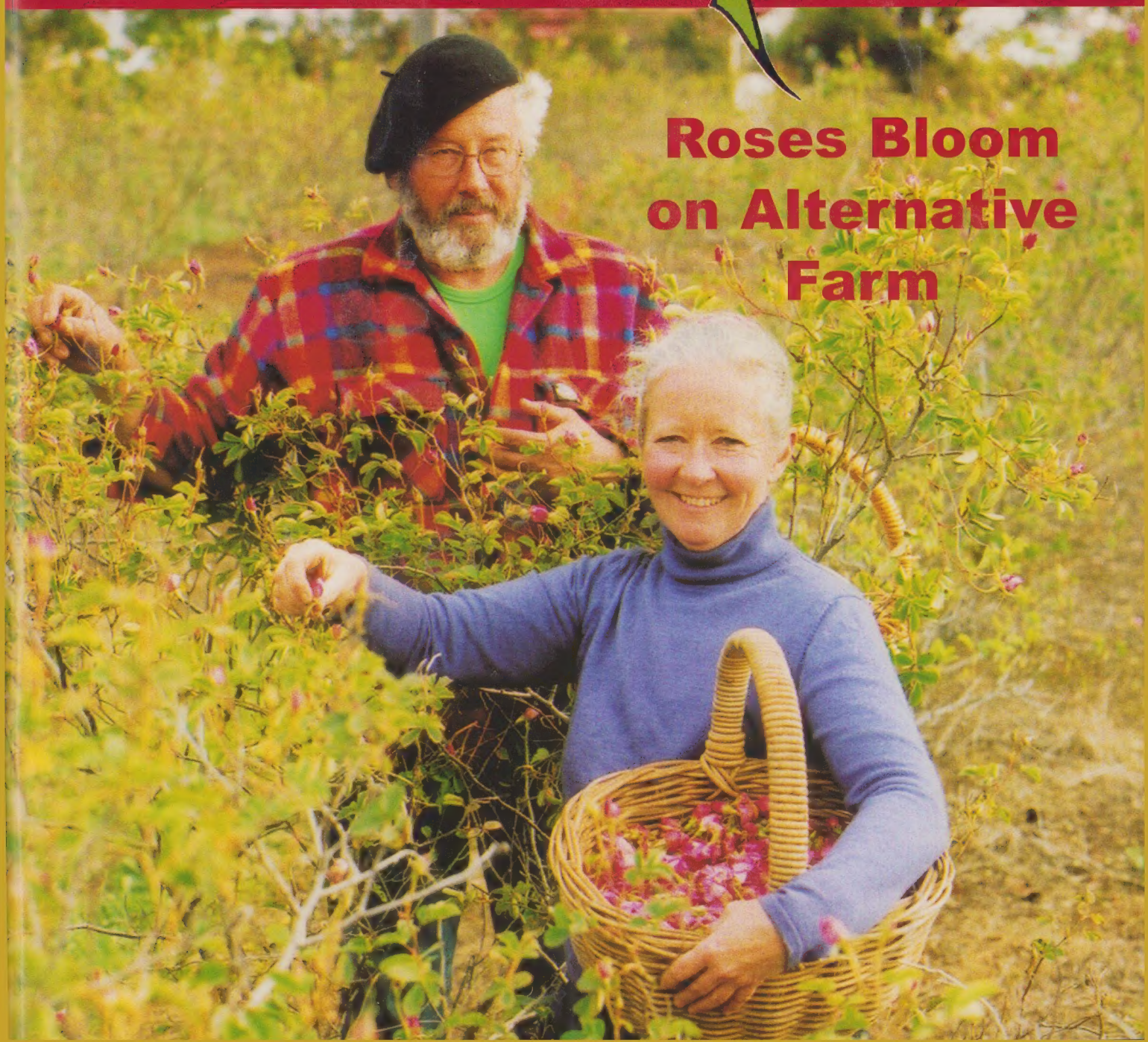

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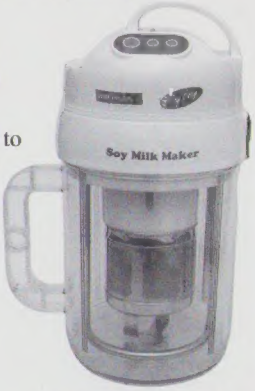

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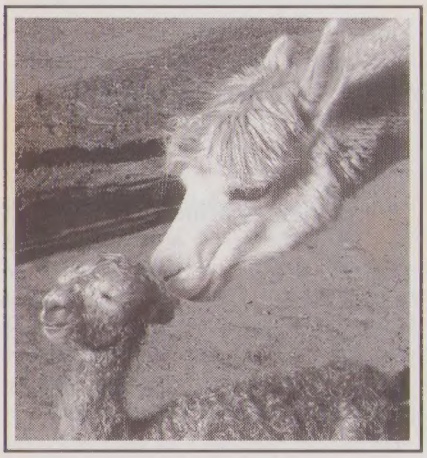

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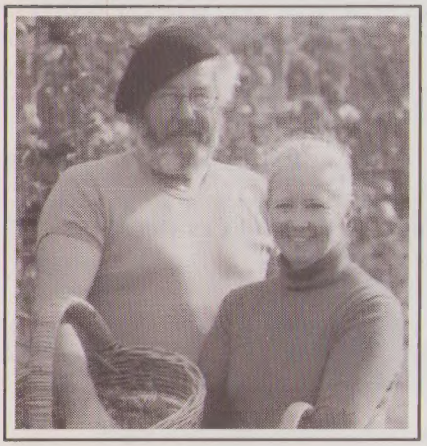

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COVER PHOTOS

Front Cover: Don Maling and Sue Matheson are so busy with their varied activities on Samaria Farm that there is little time to stop and smell the roses. Luckily, they are surrounded by fragrance as they harvest.

Back Cover: Baskets of gorgeous perfumed 'Vivienne Maire' roses ready for distilling into rose-water. Read Don and Sue's inspiring story on page 6.

Front and back cover photos by Marcel Aucar.

Edited by Megg Miller and Mary Horsfall.

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GUMNUT GOSSIP

by Megg Miller.

Roberino, whatever would we do without you? Roberino's Feedback letters and unconventional recycling ideas elicit all sorts of responses from readers, and you know when you see his name in print alongside a contribution it will present a viewpoint different from most others. Readers are not the only ones to respond strongly. When Roberino is thinking really creatively the parcels of letters plop into our post box daily and, when opened, mount up on Mary's desk to such a height we can barely see her. Loud, loud sighing, over and over again, is the only reminder that a person is obscured behind the paper pile.

A recent note from our recycling guru prompted our thoughts on what exactly it is readers enjoy most in Roberino's contributions to the GR community. He receives a wealth of mail: 'More encouraging letters coming in . . . lots of readers write direct and thank me for this and that. It's good to know I've helped someone; more rewarding than the social work I did years ago.' Not all letters he receives are cheery. We recall a previous note sent in for Feedback that conveyed thanks for the encouraging letters received and also for the discouraging ones.

Roberino has been with us for a long time and says he's had lots of fun writing for the magazine. We don't doubt this for a minute – we think he's probably had many a chuckle as he's proposed simply preposterous possibilities and presented them as ordinary, achievable ideas. Lots of his projects are terrific, but there is the odd one you find yourself scratching your head and wondering about . . . Sorry Roberino, but my all-time favourite 'maybe' (it may work, but then it just may not) was using washed-out milk cartons, filled appropriately, for cheap insulation in buildings. The rampaging local population of possums that makes forays into my ceiling would have become frenetic at the whiff of milk that lingered, and trashed the cartons in their disappointment. And rats – let's not go down that path. Did anyone actually try this innovative insulation technique? We'd love to hear how it went.

Roberino's suggestions encourage us all to relook at our world and think about new possibilities. He often says in notes how remarkable GR is; it's thanks to individualistic free spirits like him that it is such a good read.

While discussing extraordinary people, another reader and occasional writer springs to mind, Antony Duncan from Queensland. He has written a couple of articles featuring stone masonry, his particular field of expertise. In mid 2000 he was involved in a horrific car accident and nearly lost both arms and an eye. He was a quarter-way through building his stone barn and, after recovering, he returned home '. . . with one good arm and continued – it was hell, I can tell you, but some indomitable spirit kept me at it'. Antony got the building finished after what he described as 200 big days, of some 14 hours plus, and swears it reconstituted him and simultaneously nearly killed him. You won't be surprised when I write that he consequently sold the house. He's preparing to build one last stone residence. We hope this one is free of the trauma and pain that shadowed his last project and, as he's promised to share progress with us, we can all look forward to stunning stone masonry in the future.

We've had a request from readers – more gluten-free recipes please. Sufferers of this intolerance say they have a lot of trouble finding interesting, tasty, one hundred percent gluten-free recipes, so if anyone has some tried and tested favourites we know they will be much appreciated. With Christmas looming, some appropriate dishes to make the day celebratory in its fullest sense would be fantastic. It must be difficult to keep a smile on your face when you've a pain in the pinny because you just couldn't resist the traditional plum pudding.

Bushfires are still on everyone's minds following the devastation wrought last summer and so we've been fortunate to have received articles examining both sides of the current, controversial issue – should we be practising hazard reduction burning or not? You may want to do further reading before making up your mind on this important subject, but, whatever you decide, take the opportunity in the next couple of weeks to look at your acreage or house block and start preparing for another hot dry summer. If you need to eliminate rubbish or cut back foliage, don't put it off, tackle it with the view that we all need to be proactive and put ourselves into a position that offers the best chance for survival should the unthinkable occur. Preparation really is the key for managing life and land in this dry continent.

If you were to stroll through the office right now you might wonder at the images on the screen savers, especially Suni's and Sabrina's. Suni's has displayed a fulsome Cinderella-type skirt and top, inspiration, we're told, to help with the choice of wedding dress. Sabrina's features palm trees and sandy beaches. Yes, this balmy scene is reminiscent of tropical holidays and, while I can't recall exactly how many sleeps before this awesome event, I can say she won a one-week holiday in Fiji for two, and is looking forward to this wonderful week.

Those of us with less exciting lives are enjoying the discussion about chiffon or satin and what to pack for poolside snoozing. We've got geese to talk about, or gardens. Sue's two little goslings that ran wild in the office this time last year turned out to be a pair, and are busily making a nest. As they've chosen a most inappropriate site – the floor of an imminent room extension, morning teas are allocated to devising renesting strategies. Mary has brought in packets of seed from previous bean crops so we're all going to become successful Lazy Housewives – I'm sure that was the name of the bean! Was there a back issue on growing beans? Sure to be. As Roberino wrote, 'What other mag could you pick up and read with interest 20 or more years after it was printed?'

A Rosy Affair

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

Imagine greeting the day in the midst of rows of fragrant oil roses, picking flowering blooms just as the sun rises. Sounds the perfect way to earn a living, but, just as the rose has prickles, there can be difficulties in innovative home-based enterprises.

It's 5am and Sue is smelling the roses; these are Alister Clarke's 'Amy Johnson'.

When rabbits and hares dug up row after row of lavender plants, Sue Matheson and Don Maling had to rethink plans for an essential oil enterprise on their alternative farm in the rolling hills near Mt Samaria, Benalla, in north-eastern Victoria. We took a peek at another enterprise on Sue and Don's farm – rare pigs – back in GR 144. The couple has been breeding and selling Large Black pigs for a number of years; the Large Black is numerically low and needs preservation worldwide. They believe the breed is ideal for smallholdings because of its placid nature, fecundity and mothering ability, and also because it's not hard on fencing or difficult to contain.

Pigs and roses may seem an odd combination, but they're part of an old-fashioned view that farming should encompass a range of complementary activities and crops to reduce the financial worry of having all the eggs in one basket. Sue and Don recognised their acreage was too small to make a living from traditional beef or wool production and alternative horticulture had held their interest for years. The opportunity was there to break out of mainstream farming and experiment with crops like olives, bushfoods, citrus, blue gums, floral oils and rare breeds.

The initial plan with essential oil was to observe how lavender performed in their soil type and climate. Don and Sue had admired fields of lavender in France and knew commercial growing for oil distillation was successful in Tasmania. As they were still working in the city and travelling backwards and forwards each weekend, they were keen to get plants established and the infrastructure set up so they could get started. Weekends were spent laying water pipes and erecting sheds, and at night, while recovering from their efforts, they looked at horticulture books, talked and made plans for their gardens. 'That was the fun part', Sue said. 'We did lots of reading and came up with plans for an old-world garden in an Aussie setting. The house was unmistakably Australian, but established pine trees up the driveway and around the house hinted at previous European yearnings.

'We thought hard about coming to live here full time and were keen to change our lifestyle to one where we were fitter and less stressed, but the big questions were what would we do to support ourselves and what would this require.'

They developed a farm plan with a range of 'crops' that would vary in the time they took to produce, as well as agisting a herd of cattle. 'There was twice as much to do when we were running two places and we knew from previous experience stock could be a problem. Agistment meant the responsibility belonged to someone else. It also meant we could concentrate on fences, laneways and water, and benefit from the dollars', added Don.

ROSES FOR OIL

After the problems with lavender, roses came to mind because they were a species that did well in the area. Sue looked into whether a rose oil enterprise was possible. 'Our plan was to distil rose essential oil as it was selling at the time for $17,000 per litre. The oil is used in many perfumes and we thought that if successful we would be selling to the perfume industry, maybe even France.

'The proprietors of a local rose nursery said "No, don't bother, Bulgaria already provides the bulk of rose oil." But the idea persisted.' Sue had further discussions with the nursery and the proprietors started propagating several of the oil varieties, *Rosa damascena* 'Kazanlik', the main Bulgarian variety, and a *Rosa centifolia* variety used in France and Morocco.

'I figured we would need around 3000 plants and the nursery only had a dozen on hand. It was rather frustrating because once we decided on committing ourselves we wanted to get right into it', said Sue.

The nursery made a still and produced a little rose oil, and Sue's idea looked feasible. The nursery immediately started propagating and trialled a couple of varieties, as did Sue. The disadvantage they found to using 'Kazanlik' was that it only flowered once, in spring. With oil production, the more blooms, the more oil. An Australian variety 'Vivienne Maire' proved more floriferous. An order was made to the nursery for 1500 plants for the first year's planting. With the absence of an Australian oil industry to turn to for guidance, they were pretty much on their own. But, with plant stock ordered, the nitty gritty of site preparation and establishing automatic watering had to be initiated.

SITE PREPARATION

Don and Sue chose a paddock with a north-facing slope with protection from prevailing winds to prevent plants drying out. They were fortunate, too, that the slight slope allowed natural drainage and the site was shaded from the east in the early morning – this would extend picking time considerably. The site they set aside was nearly five acres. Loamy soil with a ph of 6.5 – 7.5 was found best.

CULTIVARS

Damask varieties produce fragrant oil and the cultivars selected included 'Vivienne Maire', the Australian developed rose, 'Quatre Saisons' and 'Kazanlik', plus 'Gloire de Guilan' and 'Ispahan'. The last two proved disappointing. When selecting, they took the rose's tendency for recurrence into consideration. Recurrence means roses bloom more than once a year, unlike 'Kazanlik' and most of the old roses. Hybridised modern varieties have all been bred for recurrent blooming.

PLANTING

Roses were planted out in rows 1.5 to 2 metres apart in June and July. Individual plants were spaced at 1- to 1.5-metre intervals and a mixture of grafted and naturally occurring plants were used. The first year 1500 plants went in and a further 1500 have subsequently been added. Plants are fertilised twice yearly and have been mulched with pea straw, with mixed success. While it resulted in a higher incidence of black spot, other mulch materials (lucerne perhaps) may not produce this problem.

HARVESTING

To harvest, partly open to fully opened blooms are picked just before dawn. The heads are snapped off where they join the stalk, a quickly mastered skill. Sue and Don snap by hand, two hands actually because it's quicker, and the blooms are dropped into a bag, which, when full, is emptied into large garbage bags in a trailer parked in the shade. In case you're wondering why the picking occurs so early in the day, the warmth from the sun releases the volatile elements of the oil into the atmosphere, rendering the blooms useless for distillation.

Over a six-week period starting in mid October, Sue and Don can anticipate picking 600 kilograms of rose heads. They find it works out to about 1.5 hours per person per day, seven days a week, but production drops back after that and picking hours are

Sue Matheson and Don Maling take a break in front of their verandah at Samaria Farm.

reduced. 'Breathing the rose fragrance for a couple of hours first thing in the morning is the most uplifting experience', Sue said.

DISTILLATION AND SEPARATION

A small 200-litre still was purchased from Jeff Allen, Essential Harvest, Beechworth. 'Unfortunately, it's proved too difficult to produce and separate the rose oil from the rose-water in our equipment. More refined separation equipment managed it in trials, but we haven't found anyone to do it for us yet. We've focused on rose-water as a product, but are still hoping to track down expertise to provide some guidance on separation of rose oil and water', said Sue.

REWORKING THE PLANS

Instead of a fortune in rose oil, Sue found herself with buckets of fragrant rose-water. Ever adventurous, she used some as a skin tonic and found it refreshing. 'I tried it as a facial and skin tonic and gave it to friends. When they started saying "It's a great product, why don't you sell it?" I decided I would. An aromatherapy company in Melbourne thought it was nice, but wanted to know where the rest of my range was. That was the challenge I needed and I started searching books and the Internet for recipes for skin care and trying them. Rose-water was becoming popular too, with increased interest in Middle Eastern cooking and desserts and so there was an additional opportunity for marketing there.'

CURRENT PRODUCTS

Sue has now diversified into two ranges, selling culinary and skin care products at markets in north-eastern Victoria. She has also developed several retail outlets and mail orders via *Grass Roots* and other publications.

Her favourite product is rose-water in a spray pack – refreshing, revitalising when your spirits are down, and a tonic for the skin. Other products include hand cream, body polish, bath soak, massage oil, foot soak, foot balm and potpourri. A suggestion from a friend for products for sensitive skin has led Sue to using vegetable bases, essential oils, and even some of the olive oil produced on Samaria Farm.

Sue sells a range of rose products at markets and via mail order.

On the food side, in which Don also takes an active role, Sue is making rose syrup and Turkish delight and trialling nougat and marshmallow, and they have started compiling a recipe book for rose-water and rose petals. Both Don and Sue foresee more use of rose-water by people who enjoy cooking.

HOW EASY IS MANUFACTURING?

Making a product is just the first step: what about bottles, labelling and other requirements? Sue has found this aspect of production easier than anticipated. 'A neighbour is a graphic artist and he has designed the labels and I print most of them on an ordinary printer from my computer then cover them with Contact for waterproofing. I use sticky-backed label sheets, not precut, because I can't line up labels and standard sizes. So I print and then cut. I compare the products and prices of aromatherapy suppliers before buying and the same goes for containers. The Internet is useful here. Talking with people at markets in similar fields, say lavender products, has proved helpful too.'

FUTURE PLANS

The rose products have enabled Sue to delve deeper into health and spiritual issues, and also provided an outlet for her natural flair with display and design, so there will be more markets, more searching for healthy products and a greater emphasis on chemical-free components.

Both Sue and Don have spent hours and hours developing and planting a collection of over 2000 varieties of roses, and each year in November the place is opened for rose lovers to wander in and enjoy. A lot of work precedes this period, including cleaning out sheds housing rare poultry and pigs, and weeding paths through cottage and vegetable gardens.

Don assists Sue with the rose products and, of course, with work like dead-heading and other maintenance tasks. His plans for the future are more focused on the pigs, his special love, and he hopes work spent trying to put the Large Black back on the map and off endangered lists will pay off. Awareness of the slow food movement and the desire for real taste as distinct from artificial additives will help this breed's outcome.

Roses and pigs – not your usual mix by any means, but then Sue and Don are unique. They're prepared to work like crazy to make their plot of land pay. We haven't touched on Middle Eastern preserved lemons, candied peel and, in summer, citrusade (lemonade) from their citrus grove, or the bushfoods like lemon myrtle for seasoning home-grown pork. They moved to the country to get fitter and live a less stressful life. Hmm – with so much to fit into each day, just as well they have all that revitalising rose-water!

To buy rose products or farm produce, talk Large Black pigs or visit the rare breed farm, contact Sue Matheson and Don Maling, RMB 1687 Samaria Rd, Benalla 3673. Ph: 03-5768-2225, fax: 03-5768-2526. Photos by Marcel Aucar.

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Island Ingenuity

by Beth Montgomery, Wonthaggi, Vic.

Most readers practise a degree of self-sufficiency by choice. Beth Montgomery's years in the Solomon Islands introduced her to a culture where self-sufficiency is a necessary fact of life and gives rise to remarkable skills.

Imagine having no metals, cloth or plastics to make the things you need. How would you make clothes, baskets, furniture or even money? The people of the Pacific Islands have always used the things growing around them to make everything they need for daily life. The most obvious example is the grass skirt. Apart from clothing, other necessary and useful items such as baskets, money and furniture were all made from natural materials including plants and shells. Over thousands of years of practice, many of these practical items have become very ornate and beautiful.

LOVELY BAGS

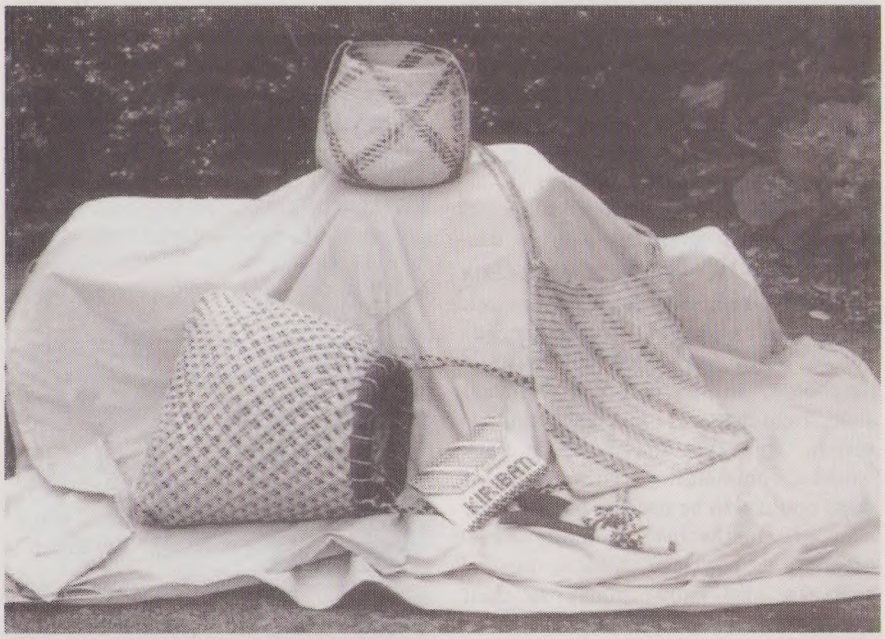
The most basic artifact needed by people is something to carry things in: a bag or basket. Pacific Islanders have become experts at weaving various materials to make these items. Many small bags and purses are made from dried grasses. The grasses produce thin strands so the job of weaving them is very intricate. Separate strands of grass can be dyed. Dyes from various plants such as mangroves will make particular colours, with reds and browns being the most common. These coloured threads are then woven with the undyed dried grass, which is a cream colour. The patterns are many and varied. The bags and purses can be decorated with feathers or small shells. Even small hand-held fans are made showing the intricate patterns that have been developed.

The most common bags in Papua New Guinea are called *billums*. These were once all made with native grasses and even the fur of cuscus, a native possum. The larger *billums* are strung across the top of the head and used to carry a range of objects including babies and small children. Today the *billum* makers have access to imported coloured wools and cottons. The result is a vast range of styles and colours.

Strong, large baskets are made from coconut leaves and even soft sticks. These are like the wicker baskets we often use as laundry baskets in our own homes.

FLAT FURNITURE

Mats are the most common piece of furniture in the Pacific. They are used to sleep on, or to sit on while eating a meal. Most mats are made from the dried leaves of the pandanus palm. Like the bag weavers, mat weavers frequently dye various strands to create patterns and even words. Today, many mat weavers add colourful strands of wool to the edges to make the mats more appealing. A large mat with a beautiful design is a valuable possession and is often given as a gift.



Bags are woven from natural and aged grasses and plants – useful as well as attractive.

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TRADITIONAL *TAPA*

The basic form of traditional cloth throughout the Pacific is the *tapa*. It is made from the bark of a special tree, the paper mulberry. The islanders strip a section of bark from the tree and bash it with a heavy stick to stretch and flatten it. Then the bark is dried in the sun. The end result is a durable, strong cloth that is soft to touch. Artists paint the *tapa* with traditional designs using black, brown and reddish dyes. The *tapa* cloth is very valuable and often used as traditional dress in many Polynesian islands.

DECORATIVE MONEY

Throughout the islands of Melanesia shells have been used for centuries as a medium of exchange. If someone needed to settle an argument with a neighbour, strings of small polished shell fragments were given as compensation. This kept the peace in very warlike communities. The strings of shell could also be used to buy pigs, or as a gift to the bride's family when planning a marriage. The strings of shell are still known today as shell money and have developed into striking jewellery. Earrings, necklaces, bracelets and traditional headbands are all available from market stalls. Even though they appear to be just jewellery, they can still be used as money, either privately or in villages.

All this wonderful craftwork – mats, bags, baskets, shell money and *tapa* – is still used by Islanders in their daily life. However, if you look carefully around the market stalls, it's available for tourists too.

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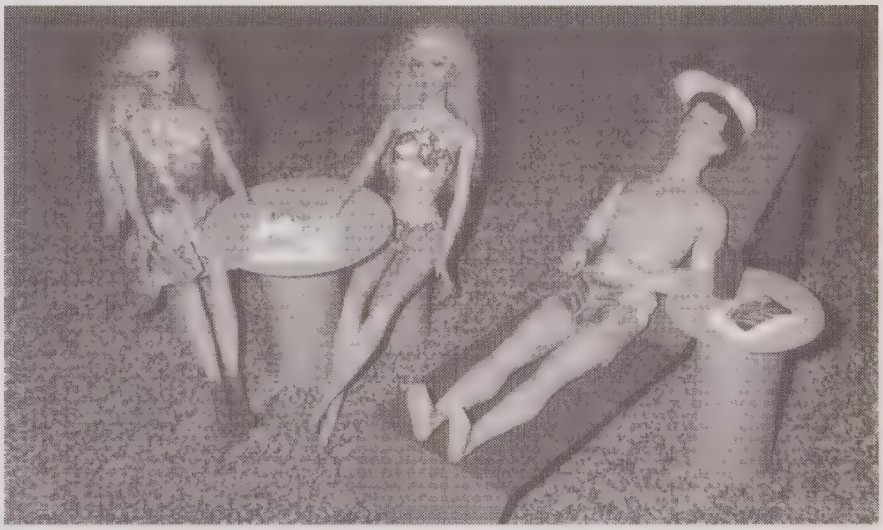
Toys From Recycled Items

by Sherryn Savage, Currambine, WA.

Wait! That cereal box and plastic lid could be a future car, a castle, anything. Paint, coloured paper and a little magic can transform rubbish into hours of fun.

It's not only the cost of toys today that puts many people off buying them, but also the fact that they are often a one-minute wonder. Your homemade toys might not last as long as shop-bought ones (then again, they might), but there's a good chance they'll last until the next craze comes along. If not, at least they cost you no more than your time. The toys are also a lot of fun to make. Get the kids involved with painting and decorating; it's a wonderful way to encourage their imagination and creativity and to spend some quality time together.

The following toys can be made mostly, if not solely, from items that would usually end up in the rubbish bin. Such treasures as toilet roll cylinders, cereal boxes, lunch wrap cylinders and plastic lids can be saved in a box ready for creative moments and rainy days.

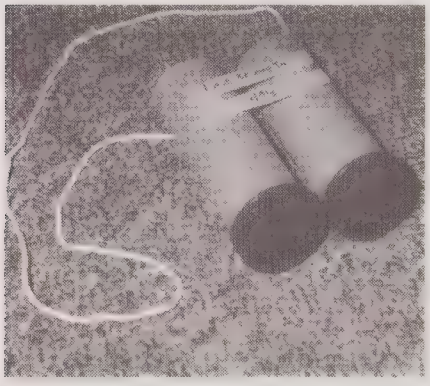


It's amazing the enjoyment kids can get from used cardboard boxes and cylinders.

BINOCULARS

1 lunch wrap cylinder
2 icy pole sticks
2 plastic lids
string

Cut the cylinder into two 10-centimetre lengths and place plastic lids over ends for lens covers. Attach string to outer sides of each cylinder by threading through and knotting. Cut icy pole sticks to six-centimetre lengths and glue across the top of cylinders to hold them together. Your child's name can then be written on the icy pole stick.



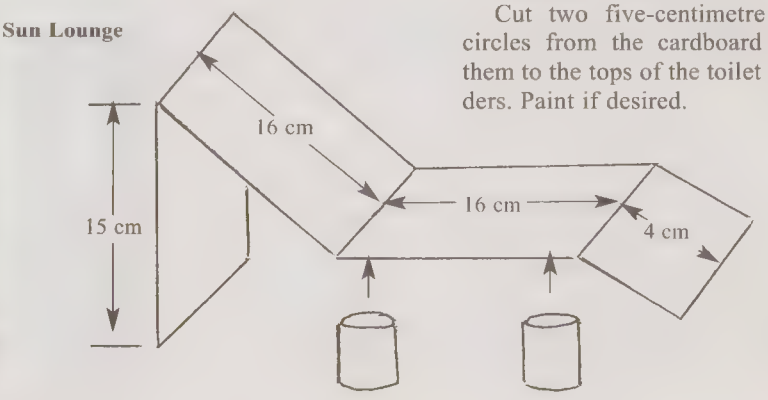
DOLL FURNITURE

Sun Lounge

1 toilet roll cylinder
1 strip of cardboard (9 x 51 cm)

Fold the strip of cardboard as indicated on the diagram. Cut the toilet roll cylinder in half, then refer to the diagram before gluing both halves into place on the sun lounge. Decorate.

Sun Lounge



Tables

2 toilet roll cylinders
cardboard (about 22 x 12 cm)

Cut two circles from the cardboard: 11 centimetres diameter for the larger table and 8 centimetres diameter for the smaller one. Glue these to the toilet roll cylinders and paint if desired.

Stools

1 toilet roll cylinder
cardboard (about 12 x 12 cm)

Cut two five-centimetre diameter circles from the cardboard and glue them to the tops of the toilet roll cylinders. Paint if desired.

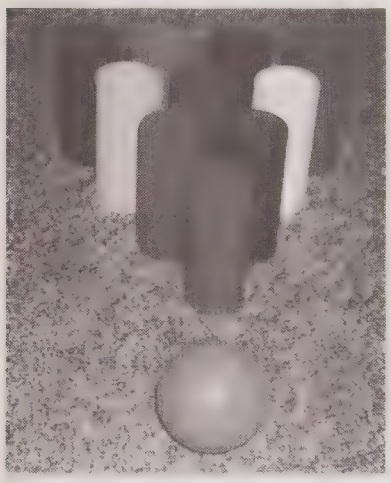
SKITTLES

10 toilet roll cylinders

1 plastic ball

Simply decorate the cylinders (paint, colour or cover).

Set the skittles up as per the photo. The game can then be played using ten-pin bowling rules, or you can make up your own set of rules to suit the age of the children playing.



SHOPPING CENTRE CARPARK

1 cereal box

18 icy pole sticks

1 thick sheet of cardboard (for base)

extra cardboard (can be coloured or use from cereal boxes and paint)

Make up a grid (see diagram) to slide into the cereal box. This will prevent the box from sinking when pressure is placed on it. Assemble grid by cutting halfway through each cardboard strip and slotting into place as shown in the diagram.

Once you have the grid in place, glue the cereal box to the corner of the thick sheet of cardboard. Cover the top of the box with extra cardboard or paint it and mark out the carpark spaces four centimetres wide by seven centimetres long.

Cover each side of the cereal box (except for the ramp end) with cardboard, making sure that the cardboard goes up over the top edge of the box by approximately three centimetres. When covering the end where the ramp is going, leave nine centimetres of this flush with the top of the cereal box to allow for the ramp to be glued into place.

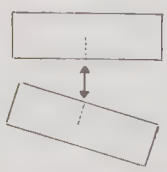
To make up the ramp cut out a piece of cardboard (20 x 9 centimetres) and glue icy pole sticks across it. A section of cardboard will remain uncovered at one end; fold this back and glue it to the top of the cereal box.

Now you are ready to mark out the carpark spaces on the lower level. You can set this out however you like, keeping in mind that you need four centimetres width by seven centimetres length for each parking space. Also allow room for the cars to get in and out of the spaces.

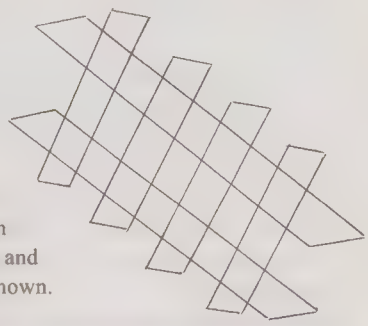
To complete your project go through magazines and cut out appropriate clippings for your shopping centre, or, if you're a good artist, put your talent to work.

Finally, all you need are some cars and you're ready to play.

Shopping Centre Carpark



Assemble grid by cutting halfway through each cardboard strip and slotting into place as shown.



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Living With Solar Power

by Christine Martin, Bowraville, NSW.

Many people are scared of giving solar power a go. They worry about the cost, but more to the point, whether there will be enough power for their needs! The step into the unknown makes it scary too. To me the benefits of solar power are just enormous and I can't quite understand why its use isn't more widespread, in light of ever-increasing power consumption and predicted shortfalls in supply.

My husband and I bought a bush block 20 kilometres out of town that had absolutely nothing on it. It had no house, electricity, phone, sewage or tap water, all things we'd taken for granted so far. If you need power, just plug in; want a shower, turn on the tap; get rid of personal waste, flush the toilet. All that without ever thinking about where it comes from or where it goes. It was hard to imagine what it would be like to live without all that.

I had my first glimpse of such a lifestyle when we travelled through Asia. People there didn't need TV or refrigerators; they lived off their land under primitive conditions, some would say. But what I experienced was truly happy, down-to-earth people with real smiles, not the artificial life I was used to, inhabited by citizens with fake smiles, if you get them to smile at all. You might be asking what all that has to do with solar power.

To me, living with solar power is a lifestyle. You learn to live with what you've got and to appreciate it. When we started, we put up a one-room bush-pole shack with the only power tool being a chainsaw. We had a fuel stove to cook on, which also heated the water for showers, and a small gas fridge out of our camper. We started off with candlelight and music from a 12-volt car stereo running off a car battery.

I look back at those beginnings with fond memories; they were the best years of my life. We found ourselves going to bed when it got dark and getting up when the sun came up. We learnt to live with the rhythm of Mother Nature. It was a dry time so we filled our first water tank by hand, going backwards and forwards with a drum on the back of our Landrover to the only pool of water that was left above ground, which was at the back part of our property in the rainforest. You really learn to use water wisely that way! A dip in the creek can be just as cleansing as, if not more enjoyable than, a hot shower.

People from the everyday world of going to work, paying the bills and never having enough time find it hard to believe how we could give up all our 'conveniences'. They might even pity us, perceiving us as impoverished. I find it difficult to describe what an enriched

existence I found instead, a sense of happiness, achievement, confidence, satisfaction – just a sense of all-round wellbeing. It is so rewarding building your own place, creating a garden, eating your own vegetables, collecting eggs from your own chooks, or trying to milk a cow for the first time.

We experimented with alternative lighting and learnt, for example, that those pressure lamps (you know the ones you pump up) you might use for camping are bright but also pretty noisy. We tried out a gas lamp and found that those stockings are very fragile, even insects flying into the light might damage them.

During the day we were busy building our house, starting with a cellar. It makes so much sense, in this climate, to have a dry, dark, cool place to store anything from vegetables, homebrews, pickles and jams to spare mattresses or any other junk you want out of sight. Now, what has that to do with solar power? It's conserving energy by storing food without using power, as well as insulating the house from the ground up, resulting in less heating in winter and less cooling in summer. We have a split-level, open plan design, which means that the wood heater in the living room, at the lowest level, heats the whole house very efficiently.

When we moved into our new house we started off with a couple of panels running on 12 volts. This gave enough power for lights, music and a small black and white TV. It was hard to find appliances that run on 12 volts, so over the years we added more panels and an inverter to be able to use 240 volts. The fridge, a constant consumer, runs on gas, as does the stove. For the washing machine and vacuum cleaner, which use a lot of power, especially when you start them up, we use the generator. I combine those two jobs and do the washing at the same time as the vacuuming, making that my domestic day of the week. If you're looking for a back-up generator, go for one that you can start with a push start button not a pull start. I found the pull start quite a challenge at times and I hate asking for help!

More panels and an inverter have been added so we can use 240-volt appliances.

We went from 60 watts to 350 watts over the years and can run everything, including TV, video, Playstation, computer and kitchen appliances. We started off with second-hand batteries, but technology is advancing rapidly and these days you can purchase batteries that are much better quality and are guaranteed for 10 years.

I recommend starting off small so you learn to change from being a consumer to being a conservationist. You find out which appliances are the big power users as well as not having much power when it's cloudy for weeks. It becomes as logical to use less energy on those days as it is not to go outside gardening in the rain. You still have the possibility though, if you absolutely have to, of using a generator to charge your batteries, just as you could put on a raincoat to do your gardening. You just go with the flow and learn to live with it. It's also a very reasonable excuse for the kids, as well as ourselves of course, not to watch too much TV.

I am so glad that we were too far away from mains electricity and therefore financially forced to use solar power. I wouldn't go any other way now. The freedom of having your own energy, being self-sufficient and not having to pay those monthly bills (are they monthly or quarterly?) is just fantastic. I have to admit I can't help but smile to myself when neighbours talk of blackouts. I'd much rather deal with my own problems of recharging batteries, for instance, than helplessly wait with frustration for the power company to fix any problem and be at their mercy.

We took advantage of the SEDA scheme, which stands for 'Sustainable Energy Development Authority', for our second home. It provides a rebate per watt on your solar power system, if they approve your application. With this we went for a much bigger system that would run everything we could ever need, from fridge to vacuum cleaner to power tools. The systems these days are quite impressive; they remove the guesswork and, with a push of a button, can tell you exactly how much power you used, how much energy was produced and at what level your batteries are.

As you can see, there is a right solar system for everyone's needs. It depends how much power you really need (try going without it for awhile – it's a great experience), or what your financial situation is. I hope this gives you some encouragement to give solar power a go.

The Martin's home is part of the Tallowood School's Handmade House Tour, which is the major fundraiser each year for this innovative community school. For enquires about the school or the tour phone Darryl Ewart on 02-6564-7619, or email: tallow@nor.com.au

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THE OPEN ROAD
The Journey Begins

by Julia LeMonde, On The Road, Australia.

We're on the way . . . two adults, three children, and a van called Bertie! Our much awaited, year-long trip around Australia has begun. It's some time since an inkling of an Australian odyssey took root at the back of my mind. Initially, the misgivings threatened to obliterate the merest whisper of any deviation from the familiar. Travelling with children and funding the trip were just two of the issues we confronted. With a decision to relocate back to Australia, my husband and I were also closing a chapter of our lives in New Zealand, with an indeterminate future at the journey's end.

Mentally processing the numerous uncertainties meant that the planning phase took time. Only then could we prepare the children for what lay ahead and manage their queries and concerns. Excitement and eager anticipation of our forthcoming trip followed, and more active travel plans began. My inkling of a dream was becoming a reality.

The next step was to decide how a family who had lived in a large house on a farm would fit into some sort of travelling home. We hired a motorhome on a trial basis and discovered just how unsuitable this was for us. The main disadvantage was the lack of space. The cost was also high, even with the buy-back schemes and long-term rental packages available. I still imagine myself occasionally, in a huge air-conditioned Winnebago motorhome, although the budget won't accommodate this right now!

We eventually settled on a camper trailer seen at a Queensland camping expo. The rig is comfortable to tow and folds out into a large sleeping area. An appealing aspect is that the camper opens up in minutes. For longer stops we attach the annexe and floor for an extra living area.

We also carry a small tent for longer stopovers, which is our fly-proof café, for indoor cooking, dining and family area. Our vehicle is a 12-seater van, which we have converted to accommodate cupboards and a three-way 150-litre fridge. It was a monumental moment when the Esky was relieved of its refrigeration duties. There is only so much soggy lettuce and cheese floating in melted ice that can be incorporated into the 'isn't roughing it exciting?' domain! We can now store all the food in the van and have picnics and meals anywhere. A gas burner and portable oven complete the package.

The camping outfit we have chosen is comfortable and we are able to be self-sufficient at nonpowered sites.

It hasn't taken long to realise that one year of travel only scratches the surface of this vast country. I imagine returning to special places and visiting new ones as well, in various modes of transport suited to my age and comfort level. The means of travel are as diverse as the country itself. From following the free camping spots, to working the harvest trail around, to taking packaged tours, or anything in between . . . there is something for everyone.

If you are contemplating a pilgrimage, the open road beckons. I'm so glad my journey has begun.

Our camper trailer with van in the background and three of the travellers.

Make A Birdbath

by Annette Shaw, Lardners Track, Vic.

Thornbills visit the birdbath outside our kitchen window. These little birds always stop me in my tracks; they are so impossibly small (golf ball size), with thin beaks and legs no thicker than fine wire. They jump in and out of the water, taking turns to be on guard as their little group bathes. I can't tell you how wonderful it is to witness this. Mind you, even a pesky blackbird has made me laugh with his antics as he throws himself into bathing with such gusto and sprays water all around.

My concrete birdbath has given me so much pleasure. It looks beautiful, I enjoyed making it and the delight of watching birds do their thing can't be measured. You don't need a great deal to make one: half to one bag of concrete mix or a mixture of cement and sand. Make your dish as big as you like. Mine is about 40 centimetres in diameter and about 15 centimetres deep.

Clear about a metre spot on the ground and make a mound of earth or sand the size you want the inside of the dish to be. Keep it fairly wide and shallow.

Mix up your concrete and apply an even coat of three to four centimetres thickness over the mound.

You might like to make a little moat around the mould to give the dish a rounded edge. You might also like to flatten the top a little so the dish will sit flat when turned over. Cover it with wet rags and leave to set for at least two to three days. Keep it damp for 48 hours. The slow curing will give it strength. The dish doesn't have to be too perfect as long as it's watertight. It will get nicer with age too!

We usually sit our birdbath on an old ceramic pipe, set in the ground a little. When we lift the dish to replace the water we see half a dozen frogs in the stand; how they get in or out we don't know, but they do!

I have also used a tall stump, a tree fern base, a terracotta pot and a concrete block at different times for bases to the birdbath. In fact when I first made my birdbath I got carried away and made them for my friends for Christmas presents. I also made a little concrete moat under a tree. The moat was about a metre round and very shallow. When my children were little a bucket of water would go a long way and give a lot of fun. We sailed leaf boats around it, or they would simply splash around in circles getting their feet wet. They had hours of fun in their little concrete moat. I guess we all like splashing in water!

Yes, these fabulous birdbaths are homemade and you don't need to be an expert to make them. Look closely at your garden and design a shape that is complementary to it.

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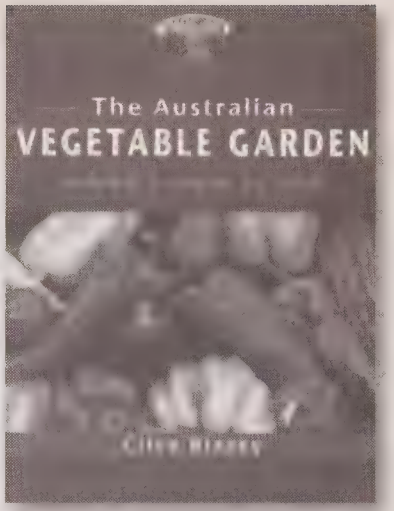

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Going Bananas

by John Mount, Woodford, Qld.

Want your bananas to last longer? One way to delay browning is to wrap them.

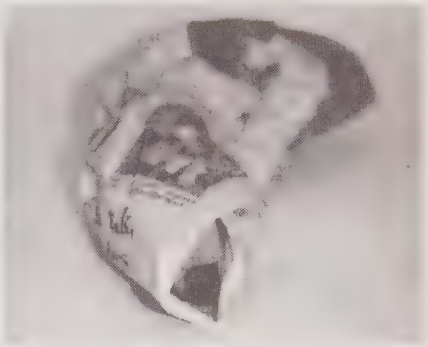
At Wimbledon many of the spectators enjoy their strawberries and cream, while some of the players will be busy munching away at bananas. Bananas, it seems, are very popular courtside, mainly because they have a high natural sugar content, which is absorbed quickly into the bloodstream, resulting in long bursts of energy.

Bananas also contain high levels of phosphorous and potassium, which are thought to be essential for energy production and to help prevent muscle cramp and spasm. It is widely believed that a diet of bananas will sustain the human body for quite a long time. Is it any wonder that bananas are so popular with the tennis clique?

The banana plant can grow up to nine metres in height. Although it looks like a tree it produces no wood, so is actually a very large herb, probably the largest herb in the world.

The oil of bananas has been used to condition leather. The idea is to rub the leather with the inside of a fresh banana skin and allow to dry without polishing.

The problem with bananas is that once the skin is removed the fruit quickly darkens. However, bananas can be prevented from darkening by submerging the peeled fruit in cold water, or by sprinkling it with lemon juice or sherry before adding it to fruit salads or other dishes. Bananas, even in their skins, often darken before they can be eaten. Once ripe, they can be



kept a little longer by wrapping them completely in foil or newspaper and keeping them in the vegetable section of the refrigerator. The skins will turn black, but the flesh will remain unchanged for a few days.

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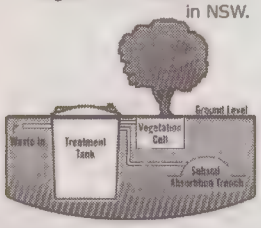

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Alpacas: Not Just A Pretty Face

by Evon Binney, Nanango, Qld.

The sight of a defenceless baby lamb torn to pieces is enough to make anyone sick. Foxes usually go for the throat, although some lambs are killed by multiple bites to the neck and back. If there is severe bone damage, chances are it has been an attack by a dog, and, in some cases, the most dangerous predator of all might be your neighbour's pet. However, if the particular situation is assessed carefully, there could be a solution.

A pair of mature alpaca wethers can be expected to perform successfully as sheep and goat guardians. The alpacas bond with their foster herd and are naturally aggressive towards predators. A situation where guarding alpacas could be exposed to large packs of wild dogs is not considered a reasonable expectation. Placement of alpacas as guard animals needs to be done with a careful and realistic approach.

Alpacas are adept at shielding their own females and crias, who gather behind the guardian males. The high-pitched sound, similar to a donkey braying, is usually enough to frighten off predators and alert the owners. Failing this vocal assault, if the herd is threatened, the wethers run forward at full pace and kick out with their feet. Alpaca feet are formidable weapons. Curved, calloused toes are designed to do a lot of damage. The kick of an alpaca weighing between 70 and 90 kilograms can, and does, break bones. As well as the severe kicking and raking, the alpaca will knock down the predator and, using his sharp chest bone as a weapon, roll the predator back and forth, effectively crushing it to death. The guardians also jump over the predator and kick backwards and sideways.

John Elliott, of Mysty Gums Alpacas at Nanango, has witnessed an attack.

'I've actually seen them kill a fox,' he said. 'The other animals come in close to watch the predator get squashed. Dingos, being the intelligent animals that they are, stay clear of a paddock alpacas are guarding. It is mainly foxes after lambs or kids, or wild dogs after the thrill of a chase, that are silly enough to tangle with an alpaca. A dingo is not silly, though a wild dog is a different story. But it must be remembered that it is essential for two or three alpacas to be used together.'

Mother alpaca, Katie, keeps a close eye on her recently born cria, Mysty Gums Binney. A well-trained alpaca female will not view humans as a threat.

The old fox in the hen house problem could become a thing of the past if the pen was placed in the paddock guarded by the alpacas. Anything that prevents the sight of several of your fattened roosters and favourite laying hens spread around the paddock with their heads torn off and the bodies left to waste has to be worth investigation.

A macho or entire male alpaca is very gentle with people compared with a male goat or sheep. They can be wethered at 12 months, but are not mature until two years old. The wethers are gentler still. You can expect your alpaca to have an average life span of 25 years.

Even members of parliament can't resist alpacas. Dorothy Pratt, Independent Member for Barambah in Queensland, found these wethers charming. These same placid fellows are quite capable of repelling foxes and wild dogs when protecting their flock, however.

Without the protection of the adult alpacas a young cria like this one could quite easily become a meal for a predator.

Aside from this recent role as guardians, alpacas are bred in Australia as fleece animals. Local spinners eagerly seek the fleece from domestic alpacas. Once upon a time the ancient Inca tribes of South America were the only people to benefit from ownership of alpacas. Superior fleeces produced clothing for the Incan royalty.

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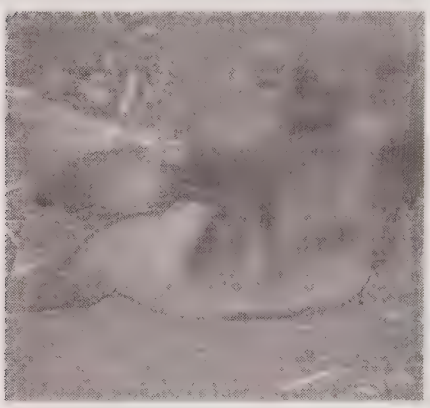

A guardian alpaca can do immense damage with their curved calloused toes and strong kick.

The alpaca is a low-maintenance, cud-chewing ruminant. It has pads rather than hooves, so does less damage to the ground than other farm animals. Shearing is necessary once a year and vaccinations twice yearly. Alpacas do not suffer from flystrike or footrot and are easily managed and transported. An expectation of three young, every four years, from mature females is considered reasonable. Interestingly, the animals breed in the 'cush' (prone) position and the female will refuse to sit down for, and will probably spit at, an unwelcome male.

The alpaca is indeed a very versatile animal. The dung makes excellent fertiliser and is easily collected from 'poo piles' where they avoid grazing. It makes excellent compost and breaks down to fine humus.

The purchase price of a mature wether can be less than $500. Compared with the equivalent cost for an alternative guardian animal that has to be hand fed, this is very reasonable. It is a misconception that they cost thousands of dollars.

While it is possible to have a single alpaca as a pet, it is in the animal's best interest to have another for companionship. With regular gentle handling from an early age alpacas make beautiful, productive and protective companions.

If you want to know more about this fascinating animal or locate breeders in your area, the Australian Alpaca Association markets a video called 'Introduction to Alpacas' and produces a magazine, *Alpaca Australia*. It also sells a range of helpful books on camelid care. Contact it at PO Box 1076, Mitcham North 3132, ph: 03-9873-7700 or email: alpaca@alpaca.asn.au The Internet site is at www.alpaca.asn.au

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PEASANT COOKING

by Roberino, Arrawarra Beach, NSW.

Every so often someone will write to GR asking for ways to economise on their food bills. In poverty stricken Europe during and after the devastating wars of the last 200 years there became known a type of cuisine called 'peasant cooking'. This consisted of simple meals made without much cost or complicated cooking equipment – usually just one pot over an open fire on the ground. Many of these people lived to a ripe old age, if the arrows, bullets or bombs didn't get them first. During the Depression years of the 1930s people didn't spend up big on food and got by on very simple fare. Many of them also lived to a ripe old age. As obesity becomes a life-threatening reality for more and more Australians, a return to peasant food could be a life saver, not to mention a money saver.

A trip to Southeast Asia will reinforce the notion that Australians are eating food quantities more akin to the needs of small elephants. Most Asians are not obese, and the quantity of food they eat each day is only a fraction of what the average Caucasian Australian eats. They eat less fatty food also. Adopting Asian food could be to our decided advantage, both health-wise and pocket-wise. It's very time saving too.

The traditional British or European diet was developed originally for cold climate living: for keeping warm. I have known of people coming from Tasmania to live in the subtropical area where I reside and putting on many kilos in a few months because they didn't cut down on their usual Tassie food intake and adopt a diet more suited to the warmer climate. They could have lived on salads and saved money.

CELERIAC SOUP

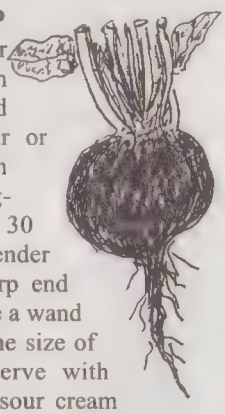
Take celeriac or celery root. Peel well to remove the woody skin. Chop (or grate) into about two-centimetre cubes.

Boil in four to five times as much water as the vegetable. After 30 minutes, or when tender, use a wand blender to reduce to a creamy consistency.

Serve with a dob of sour cream or yoghurt and Parmesan cheese. Season to taste.

Variations: Boil up with onion and/or add garlic during the last 10 minutes of cooking. Can be served with chopped chives or coriander as a garnish. Can be boiled up with some rice or oats. Serve with toast cubes, corn chips and sweet corn cobs or kernels. Can be used hot or chilled.

BEETROOT SOUP



Take three or four small to medium beets, peeled and diced. Boil in four or five times as much water as the vegetable. After 30 minutes, or when tender (prod with the sharp end of a satay stick), use a wand blender to reduce the size of the beet cubes. Serve with lashings (ouch) of sour cream or yoghurt. Season to taste.

Variations: Boil up with just about any other vegies – carrot works well. But with most peasant food the 'kiss' principle works best. Kiss? Keep it simple Superman.

Can be eaten hot or chilled.

FISHERMAN'S HASH

1 kg washed potatoes
1 lge or 2 med parsnips
1 tbsp peanut oil
½ rasher bacon (the lean bit), chopped
1 onion, finely chopped
garlic, finely chopped, to taste
cheese, shredded, for topping
chilli, chopped, to taste
sour cream, for topping
dill or coriander, chopped, to taste

Vegetarians can leave the bacon out.

This is guaranteed to stick to your ribs on a freezing night with a sharp Atlantic gale whistling around your ears, and it's probably one of the few meals capable of being cooked under such conditions.

Boil one kilogram of medium-sized potatoes with their skins on, together with the parsnip. In a nonstick fry-pan heat as much peanut oil and chopped bacon as you think is wise for your arteries. Add the onion. Sauté this lot for a while until the onion becomes clear. Mash the potatoes and parsnips and add to the sautéd onion. Press the lot into a flat 'cake'. Sprinkle the top of all this with chopped garlic and shredded cheese (of your preference). Chilli freaks can make a grand entrance here and sprinkle chilli on the top – not for kids though. You masochistic/sadistic chilli/pepper people can add it just before eating, and add some sour cream on top to make it smoother. Chopped fresh dill or coriander could be sprinkled on top now or at serving.

Cook 25 to 50 minutes over medium heat, depending on your stove, or until the bottom is crusty. Keep checking and shuffling the pan to be sure it's not sticking. Serve crusty side (bottom) up with chopped lettuce and tomato on the side and nice wine. Feeds 2 to 4.

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Grapes Going To The Pot

by Jose Robinson, Noosaville, Qld.

Believe it or not, grape vines are particularly suited for growing in containers. I've proved it! Grapes are quite hardy and, in this neck of the woods, perform extremely well in large pots. Originally, I had the vine planted in the ground in my orchard. However, when I relocated some months ago to a much smaller garden space I decided to try it in a large pot.

The vine had produced one season of fruit, but results were not brilliant. When I relocated I drastically pruned it and placed it into a very large container. As I write, the vine is loaded with dozens of bunches of ripening grapes. The container must, of course, reduce the root spread, but the plant's growth rate above the pot is remarkable.

A potted vine should be placed where there is plenty of sunlight and the soil should never be allowed to dry out. Grape vines are fairly hardy and don't need a lot of attention once established.

I've been giving the plant plenty of organic tea in the form of watered-down liquid from my worm farm and liquid seaweed when available from my own brew, especially in hot weather. Containers should be well drained. Grapes like a handful of rock dust occasionally and this should improve the growth of the vine. To date, I've had no trouble from birds or bugs, but I snip off an occasional leaf that shows any sign of mildew. Grape vines in containers will perform well in most temperate to cool climate areas.

My vine has grown so extensively that it is now providing summer shade for some more delicate plants. All the cuttings from my first drastic pruning took very well and quickly, so I had many plants to give away. We now await a feast of mouth-watering fruit!

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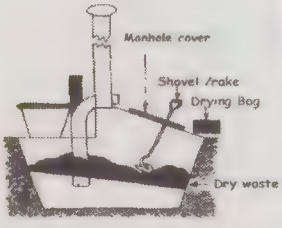

. Backup fan available for domestic applications

It is only the dried waste that requires removal after a few years. A shovel and container is all that is necessary

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THE LINCOLN

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

The Lincoln is a remarkable breed. It ranks among the largest bodied sheep and has the strongest (coarsest) wool with the longest staple of any British breed. Its origins go back to antiquity, the Romans, no less, when domiciled around Lindum (Lincoln), and it contributed significantly to the all-important wool trade in medieval times. Its distant past is rich and colourful.

Its value in more recent centuries hasn't been just for fleece but as a crossing sire, transmitting size and fleece weight to 19th century Merinos and producing a useful crossbred. Later it was used in developing two dual-purpose breeds, the Corriedale and Polwarth. In its heyday it was exported around the world to places as diverse as Russia and Argentina and used to improve local races of sheep. It also played a dominant role in establishing both the New Zealand and Australian sheep industries in the years between 1870 and 1930 and is one of our key heritage breeds.

The fens and rolling lowlands of Lincolnshire were home to this hardy breed, offering little shelter from persistent cold wind and winter temperatures as low as minus 4° C. Only minor differences distinguished the sheep of Lincoln and those from nearby Leicestershire until Robert Bakewell took the Leicester in hand and improved it, with the result it was the most popular breed of sheep at the start of the 19th century. The Lincoln also was improved, with an infusion of Leicester, and transformed into a smaller animal with more desirable economic traits.

Lincolns arrived in Australia in the 1830s, but the breed didn't take off till the 1870s. They were initially established in Tasmania and Western Victoria, many of the breeders also running flocks of Merino. A cross of the two proved useful for improving the Merino. Some 250 Lincoln rams per year were transported to the Riverina district of NSW for cross breeding with Merinos during the 1930s and early 1940s. Current wool producers don't acknowledge the role the Lincoln (and also the Leicester) played in the early days of the Merino's development, but they were instrumental in increasing body size as well as staple length.

The Lincoln became immensely popular in the decades prior to and following Federation. Wool from the Lincoln-Merino cross attracted higher prices in Britain than purebred Merino because manufacturers required strong combing fleece for the worsted trade. But as the needs of the sheep industry changed, the Lincoln was displaced by the Border Leicester and even the Corriedale and Polwarth. Numbers have dwindled over the ensuing years with only 12 registered studs still in existence. To date the Lincoln has not been able to reinvent itself and without a specific niche its future doesn't look bright.

BREED PROFILE

The Lincoln is a large-framed, well-built sheep with a heavy, long-stapled lustrous fleece. The latter falls into wavy locks, not unlike the fleece of the Leicester, but the crimp or waves are broader and looser and the wool fibre considerably stronger. It is polled and has a white face free of wool, though a topknot on the poll falls down over the face. Nostrils are black, as are the hooves.

Temperament

The Lincoln is described by owners as being very individualistic. It has a calm disposition and is reasonably easy to handle. Some early texts described Lincolns as lazy and inclined to get fat, further evidence of a placid nature. Regular feeding and handling will ensure animals stay manageable.

Of the natural fibres, wool from Lincoln sheep is second only to flax for its strength.

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Heavily woolled stud Lincolns at Yarrawonga, Victoria, prior to shearing before summer.

Recommended Environment

Fortunately, two distinct types of Lincolns have developed over the years: a larger-bodied type that thrives in the drier, sheep-wheat zones and one which has better quality wool and prospers in the wetter districts. Lincolns need good feed so they're not the best choice if you have marginal land.

Fibre Character

Most breeders of Lincolns describe them as a dual-purpose sheep, however, their long fleece is a major feature of the breed. The wool is very long – around 30 centimetres and from 35 – 40 micron in diameter, which is coarse. The wool grows approximately two centimetres per month. The crimp or wave is broad and the fibre has a glossy silvery appearance, known as lustre, and absorbs dye extremely well. It's not a specialty carpet wool like that from Drysdales, despite its length and strength. Speciality carpet wool is comprised of medullated or hollow fibres, though fleece from breeds like Lincoln and Leicester may be used as filler wools. Most Lincoln breeders sell their wool to craftspeople, where it's often blended with mohair, and to doll makers for wigs. There has been good demand for use as roller lapping in woollen mills, though synthetic fibres are superseding strong wool for the task.

Carcass Production

Lincolns won't produce fast-growing prime lamb that you can sell competitively in the market, but you can produce a lean, if rather late maturing, lamb for the freezer. The animals have a large square body and need to eat well to cover it. But, in their favour, the lambs retain their robustness for a longer period than lambs from other long wool breeds and so despatch could be successfully staggered to suit freezer space.

Breeding

Prolificacy is moderate, ewes averaging around 1.38 lambs under reasonable conditions. The breed is long-lived so ewes produce offspring for years.

Special Features

If you like the idea of becoming involved in conserving the Lincoln, keep in mind it was described once as being as large as a pony. This is an exaggeration, but it's not uncommon for breeders of the larger-bodied type to have ewes over 100 kilograms in weight. Lincolns are said to retain vigour and so cut a heavy fleece for longer than many other breeds, an attractive proposition for owners of small flocks.

Breed Society Viewpoint

Numbers have declined in the last few years in both Australia and New Zealand, but are holding their own in South America. With some 400 Lincoln ewes remaining in Australia we are appealing to small farmers to get rid of their crossbred sheep and look to the Lincoln to save their craft wool as well as have a decent animal for the freezer. They will not be disappointed.

For further details on the Australian Lincoln Society, contact John Beard, 13 McVicar St, Koroit 3282. Ph: 03-5565-7916. Jacque Carr, Heritage Sheep Australia, ph/fax: 03-9428-4384 can also advise re breeders.

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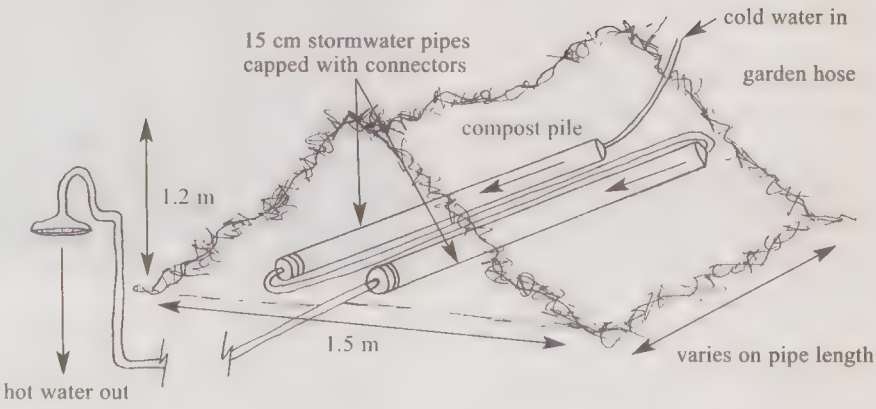
Hot Water From Compost

by David Smith, Wolumla, NSW.

After a day of cutting up wind-fallen timber, tending the vegie patch, putting guttering on the shed and mulching my fruit trees, I'm as happy as a pig in mud and about as dirty. I used to have a swim in the dam in summer, or fire up the outside copper and draw a bath on colder days. How I longed for the convenience of on-tap hot water.

Like many people living a sustainable lifestyle, I'm living in a 'temporary' log cabin with no power while I attempt to find the time, money and need to build a 'real house'. I just love the log cabin. Having a big vegie patch and orchard, as well as ever-increasing native gardens, I always need lots of good compost. Over the years, while tending my 10 cubic metre or more compost pile, I have noticed the amazing amount of heat the microfauna produce for six months or more. The core of the pile will sustain temperatures of 40° C to 70° C, depending on how often I turn it or how much water I give it.

A few months ago I finally installed an idea I've had for years. It's a compost-powered hot water producer. Like a lot of good things it didn't cost much and took less than half a day, it just required doing! The result is bliss. I have free on-tap hot water for the next six months or more. Then I'll use the compost on my vegies and orchard, put down my next compost, and the hot water is back on.



The water coming out of my shower (15 metres via polypipe from my compost) is a hot shower temperature and I've had several people have showers in a row with no change in the water temperature.

I turn the compost every six to eight weeks and during this process the heating units slip out and are then re-covered. By hand it took me two hours, but now I have a bobcat loader and it only takes me five to ten minutes.

The heating units could be made from a variety of materials. I used some 15-centimetre stormwater pipes, capped with connectors and joined with a length of hose. Most of this stuff can be found for cheap at a revolve tip centre.

The bulk ingredients of the compost are sawdust and manure. Your normal small vegie scraps and clippings compost won't work, you need a balanced

Living in a log cabin with no power has motivated David Smith to find a unique source of hot water.

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mix and at least 10 to 15 square metres. The establishment of a compost heap like this might cost a bit of money if you get the bulk materials delivered. However, sawdust is usually free if you pick it up from mills or joinery shops and the same goes for manure from dairies, horse yards or shearing sheds.

Mix your ingredients at 2.5 units of sawdust to one of manure, soak it well and in a few weeks it will be cooking.

So if you make lots of good rich compost and enjoy a hot shower, this could just be your answer!

If you're in the Bega Valley area and want to see how it works give me a call on: 02-6494-9633.

The compost heap cooking away and heating water at the same time.

Spring In The Vegie Patch

by Dorothy Creevey, Old Bonalbo, NSW.

Spring is a busy time in the vegie garden; these few suggestions will lessen the workload.

• In a no-dig garden you don't have to wait for the last crop to finish completely before planting the next. Sowing the new crop before the previous one has finished increases diversity and also shades and retains the soil so that the soil bacteria can continue with their work unhindered.

• As you cut a cabbage (leave the root and you could get a bonus small cabbage or two) poke a couple of dwarf bean seeds in the soil nearby and add a couple of handfuls of mulch.

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Ingrid Sims, 208 Nicholson Rd, Subiaco WA 6008

• If you grew a white clover green manure crop, this can be your new brassica bed. Simply cover the clover with mulch and add some compost to pockets where you want to plant cabbages. The clover will be subdued while the cabbage seedlings get a head start. Some clover will emerge later and their white flowers will help protect the cabbages from cabbage moth by making the moth think there is already a population there and move on.

• Plant tall crops like sunflowers and Jerusalem artichokes where they will help shade later summer crops like lettuce, or you could let some cucumbers grow up them.

• Interplant oca and beetroot. Beetroot doesn't like to be shaded too heavily and the oca doesn't grow tall enough to be a problem.

• Pop some potatoes underneath when you mulch the trees (not under pome fruit) and let the mulch do double duty. As leaves emerge from the mulch, place a bottomless container such as an old bucket over the plant and top up with more mulch if you are having trouble keeping them covered. When the potatoes are harvested spread the extra mulch around the tree.

An Owner Builder Experience
Before Building

by Dick Allen, D'Aguilar, Qld.

It was great to read Denise Jones's wonderful record of her experiences as a successful owner builder (GRs 149 – 151). We thank her for sharing her story.

Our first owner-built house was in Sydney and we had just finished it when we were transferred to Brisbane. We retired here after over 30 years and I promised to build my wife a smaller house for our retirement.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Some time before this we had set out to find a suitable allotment near enough and far enough away from our children. We had six special (and absolute) requirements in addition to the 12 listed in the owner builder course.

These were as follows:

- Cost of land must be less than $30,000.
- Aspect must allow a north-facing house.
- Must be on high side of road with a gentle slope.
- Must have water, power and telephone available.
- Must be free of traffic noise.
- Must be well away from high-tension power lines.

We finally settled on a block over an hour from home; it met all the above requirements, but there were no bonuses – no views and the soil was poor.

OWNER BUILDER COURSE

I think that doing an owner builder course is essential for owner builders and until it has been completed nothing can proceed. In the meantime, we selected the house plan to suit the boss (wife) and located it on the site to enable us to get soil tests completed.

Owner builder courses are run by TAFE colleges and addressed by experienced owner builders as well as professional staff. Although short, ours was an excellent introduction. The 15-hour course introduced the many requirements that had to be met by the owner builder, including legal as well as practical. Some areas covered were:

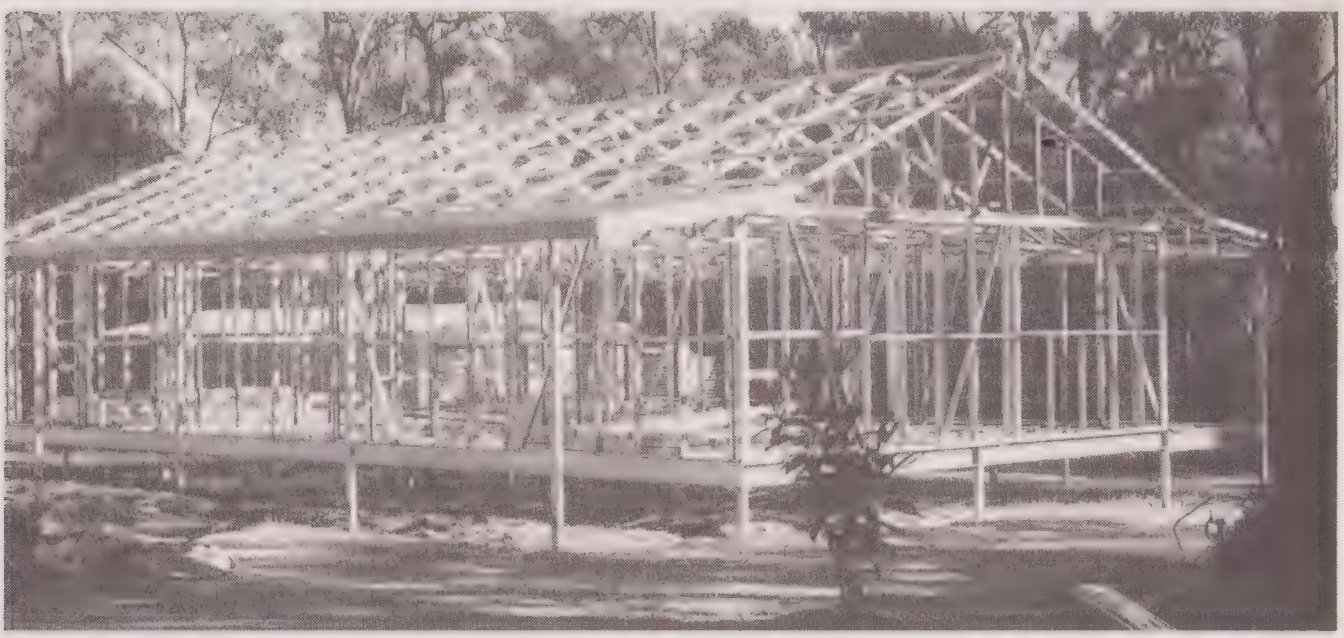
- workers' compo,
- public liability,
- personal accident and other insurances,
- material, equipment, methods.

An important lesson is that councils do not inspect workmanship, standard or quality; they only inspect for breaches of council ordinances and for the completion of stages.

DOCUMENTATION

The owner builder certificate enabled us to complete an Owner Builder Permit from the Queensland Building Services Authority (QBSA). The certificate, together with a current title search of the block, was then forwarded to the QBSA. The QBSA issued an Owner Builder Permit number, which is the basis of the application to council for a building permit. The council application was submitted with:

- portable long-service leave levy,
- registered plan of block of land,
- town planning consent,



After much research we decided on a steel frame and subfloor in order to prevent future termite problems.

• plumbing/drainage application with design,

• soil test report by qualified soil surveyor,

• soil absorption test in septic tank area,

• footing design by qualified civil engineer,

• structural engineer's certificate by a registered engineer,

• three full sets of plans and specifications.

In addition, the owner builder must obtain a Workplace Health and Safety Certificate for the building site.

STEEL FRAME, NO TERMITES

The trees on our block all had termite galleries. Even though I removed some up to 2½ metres from the ground level, they were back intact next morning. It was obvious termites would be a problem and, since Dieldrin is no longer available, there is no effective chemical termite treatment for the building site. Even Dorsban, which is a temporary measure, has been removed from sale because of its intrusion into plastic water pipes. (It has been remamed and rereleased with the stipulation it is not to be used in or around a house.)

Mechanical termite barriers are only effective if they are correctly installed, maintained properly and never broached. Initial outlay is high and they are easily broached during construction, which is very hard to detect.

We were also aware that there are drawbacks with living on concrete slabs, particularly for arthritis sufferers. Concrete slabs are prone to breaking their backs and cracking, due to differential settlement, and this could damage (and often does) water and drainage lines and broach any mechanical termite treatment. The cost of a slab designed and constructed to prevent this is prohibitive (CSIRO had such a design).

These circumstances helped us decide on a steel floor frame supported on steel piers with a termite-resistant hardwood floor. With regard to the prevalence of termites and difficulty in controlling them, we decided on a steel frame for the building as well.

Our plans were approved by council free of any requirements for termite protection, either chemical or mechanical, and we believe the extra cost will prove a saving as we will be free of any damage by termites.

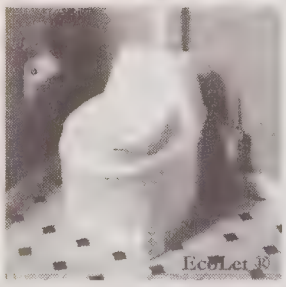
SELECTING A SUPPLIER

The layout we chose was similar to Denise Jones's, but smaller, and was easily matched by kit suppliers. We selected our kit supplier on the basis of their successful welded steel frames in W42 (able to withstand wind speeds of 42 metres per second) design zones like ours.

While the frame was being constructed we were able to inspect a number of homes that this supplier was either supplying or supplying and building to completion. During these inspections we were able to observe many problems with slab design. In one case the result was the blocking of soil pipes during the placement of the concrete slab. Rectification left much to be desired and termite protection would definitely have been broached.

Now that we knew what sort of home we wanted, we were ready to start. Next issue of GR, read about the stages we went through in building our house, some problems we overcame and what it all cost us.

HERE'S HOW TO



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Prolific Pumpkins

by Neville Jackson, Valhalla.

Pumpkins are possibly the best known members of the large Cucurbitaceae family that includes squashes, marrows, cucumbers, melons, zucchinis and gourds, both edible and ornamental. Archeological records date the domestication of the *Cucurbita* genus to 7000 BC in Central America and 1000 BC in North America.

The varied climates and soils of the Americas gave rise to 27 species within the *Cucurbita* genus. As a result of the Spanish invasion of Mexico in 1519 *Cucurbita* were brought back to Spain, but dietary acceptance in Europe was generally slow. Pumpkins were brought to the notice of Europeans in the late 1600s by Charles Perrault, author of *Cendrillon* (Cinderella and the pumpkin coach). The original story was taken from a 9th century Chinese version.

CULTIVATION

Growing pumpkins is usually simplicity itself and they are often the first vegetable to be grown by youthful gardeners. I grew pumpkins for sale to the local 'vegie man' when I was 10 years old.

The large seeds have reserves of nutrition that enable them to readily germinate as soon as adequate light and moisture are available and the ground temperature reaches the low 20s degrees Celsius. The bed should be weed free with a pH of 5.5 to 6.8. A warm moderate climate without extremes of heat or cold is best.

Compost heaps are common germination sites for volunteer (self-planted) pumpkins. *Cucurbita* are gross feeders. The more nutrients, moisture and sunlight they receive, the quicker and larger they grow. As well as compost heaps, burnt areas are favoured because of the extra carbon, potash and trace minerals.

To gain a head start in spring, plant one seed to each small pot on a sunny window ledge in a cold frame or greenhouse. Keep moist but not over-wet. For extra nutrients include some of the seed-cavity webbing from a recently cut pumpkin. This material is the plant's own fertiliser for its seed. Plant out without root disturbance at the four-leaf stage when the soil is warm. A good way to determine this is to observe when volunteer seeds germinate outside. Seeds can also be planted directly into well-fertilised mounds of soil. Plant out seedlings or seeds in spring or early summer, ensuring they have an open, sunny position with adequate drainage, moisture and nutrients. A well-mulched and hilled spot surrounded by a moat to retain water will serve well. Weed the mounds (if necessary) until leaves shade the ground. Allow plenty of room for leaders (runners). We spiral the leaders to save space.

When runners are growing vigorously, place a shovelful of well-rotted compost, manure or worm castings over the junctions, just past the female flowers. This encourages the vine to put

Our Confederate pumpkins produced 14 large fruits to one vine.

The pumpkin's feeder roots lie an average of 20 centimetres apart.

down feeder roots that contribute directly to set adjacent fruit (see photo). Frequently with this method, a dozen or more larger variety pumpkins will grow from a single vine. At Charters Towers, Queensland, we grew 50 Jap pumpkins of good size and taste from one vine. An old method of cultivation was to sever the runners just past the flowers to promote fruit set, but we found our method far better. After all, instead of the vine having one root to feed an entire plant length of perhaps more than 20 metres, we have possibly 20 subsidiary ones. That's 20 times as much moisture and nutrients available to the various fruits. Severed runners also provide the risk of introduced virus or disease.

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PESTS, DISEASES, DEFICIENCIES

Pumpkin beetles (about five millimetres long, yellowish, with four black spots), 28-spot ladybirds, aphids and slugs are the main pests of pumpkins. Spray pests with pyrethrum when seen, or remove them by hand. Slugs mainly damage the damp undersides of the pumpkins and allow ingress of fungi, so we place flat pieces of styrene box under young fruit to keep them dry and clean.

The main diseases of pumpkins are downy and powdery mildew, with sometimes damage from tobacco mosaic. The incidence of mildews is reduced if the soil is watered and not the plants' leaves. Spray plants with reconstituted skim milk powder to discourage mildews. Dilute 1:10 with water. A spray of a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda in two litres of water might help. Hot chillies finely chopped, soaked in water overnight, strained, then diluted 50:50 with water and used as a spray works well for the tobacco mosaic. Chilli spray is also useful for insect control.

Mottled or yellowed leaves may indicate molybdenum or magnesium deficiency, treatable with trace elements and Epsom salts (magnesium sulphate), twelve grams per litre of water, sprinkled over the leaves.

Ensure that sprays are only applied when bees are not active or rain is expected. Growers in Spain in the 1500s wiped onion juice on pumpkins to combat moulds.

Good companion plants are nasturtiums, borage, beans and especially corn and radish, which deter pumpkin beetle. Nitrogen-fixing legumes are also beneficial. Potatoes should not be grown close to pumpkins.

SEED SAVING

Pumpkins will readily cross-pollinate, so if you want to save true-to-variety seed you need to take matters into your own hands and fertilise the female flowers. Select the largest, healthiest blossom just before it opens. Remove the petals from a male flower and transfer pollen from stamen to pistil. The flower should be then covered with a paper bag and lightly fastened, to deny bee access.

A problem that can arise in pumpkin flesh is the presence of 'bone'. This hardened area can be discarded, but seed from this fruit should never be sown. Instead, obtain the best seed available and breed subsequent crops from selected seed.

Encourage your healthiest plant to have less fruit of good conformation by selective removal of misshapen fruit. Then choose a pumpkin with a small seed cavity and large stem. This is the very best type to produce next year's crop. To maintain a true variety ensure that other male pumpkin flowers nearby are taken off and eaten. Enjoy the flowers raw in salads, stuffed with mashed potato and diced bacon, or dipped in a light batter and grilled.

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This feeder stem is four centimetres in diameter. The larger the feeder stem the bigger and better the fruit will be.

Always check flowers for bees before picking. Many squashes will also cross-fertilise with pumpkins.

Early next year (near harvest time) we'll have another article from Neville Jackson about using your prolific crop.

PUMPKINS FIT FOR A FAIRY COACH

Like to dine on a Bohemian, a Turk's Turban or a Red Kuri? Could you happily bite into an Ironbark, or are you more the Delicata sort? Believe it or not, these are all names of heirloom varieties of pumpkins. Heirlooms are decorative as well as tasty, so jazz up a garden bed with some this summer from one of these suppliers of open-pollinated seeds: Diggers Seeds, ph: 03-5987-1877; Greenpatch Seeds, ph: 02-6551-9290; Eden Seeds, ph: 07-5486-5230; Phoenix Seeds, ph: 03-6267-9663; New Gippsland Seeds, ph: 03-9737-9560; or the Seed Saver's Network, ph: 02-6685-6624.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

All pumpkins belong to the Cucurbitaceae family, which encompasses the genus *Cucurbita*. There are 27 species within this genus, including *Cucurbita maxima* (autumn squash, winter pumpkin, winter squash); *Cucurbita moschata* (crookneck squash, pumpkin, winter squash); *Cucurbita pepo* (gourd, pumpkin, summer squash, vegetable marrow, zucchini). Features that distinguish the various species include leaf shape and fruit stalk.

There is much confusion about botanical naming of *Cucurbita* because of the variety of common names used from place to place. The common name 'pumpkin' could refer to a member of any of the above-named species. Adding to the confusion is the wide variation of races within each species. *Cucurbita pepo*, for example, includes both zucchinis and the Atlantic Giant pumpkin.

The Cucurbitaceae family also includes the genus *Cucumis* (to which cucumbers belong) and the genus *Citrullus* (to which watermelons belong).

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Buying And Storing Fleece

Whether you admire alpaca fibre or are won over by wool there are pitfalls to avoid when making a purchase. You need the right fibre for the right job and will want to store it correctly too, so read on for helpful hands-on advice from a range of GR experts.

With the onset of warmer weather, spinning wheels are usually relegated to the spare room, but, if you enjoy working with natural fibres, now is the time to source the best fleeces. If you leave it until next autumn, the attractive colours will have all been sold and fewer bargains will be available. So squeeze in a visit to your local wool producer or alpaca breeder and look through the newly shorn fleeces. You're sure to find something to suit your needs.

We asked several fibre-producing readers and advertisers to share their knowledge about the qualities of particular fibres, what they're used for, when they're available to purchase and any special points to consider when choosing fleece.

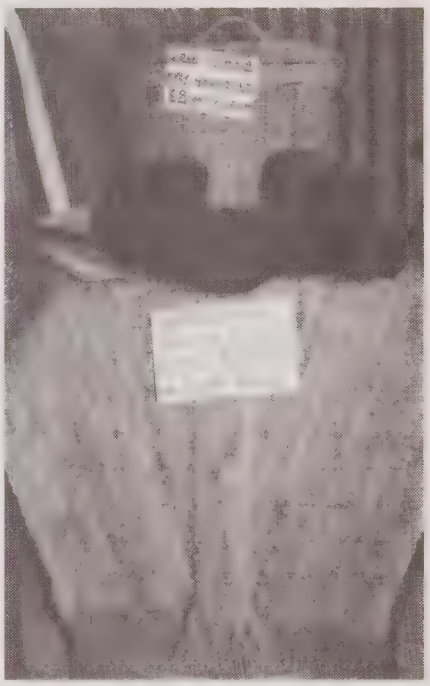
LONG AND CRIMPED

The Perendale was one of the sheep stars on the cover of GR 151 as well as featuring in a breed profile in GR 152. Maureen Nissen runs Pergunyah Perendales at Mansfield, Victoria, and is the Secretary of the Australian Perendale Association. She sells a lot of fleece to hand-spinners because Perendale fleece is clean and has only a short tip so needs little preparation prior to spinning. Garments shape well because Perendales have a distinct helical (spiral) crimp, which means fibres tend to coil and spring back into shape. As well, layers of air get trapped within the spirals, increasing the insulative effect. The Perendale is the only sheep in the British long-wool group to carry the helical crimp. Maureen also sells to a wool broker, who sends the fleece to China for the making of apparel. In past years Perendale wool was utilised in carpet making.

Perendale fleece is very bulky, which is good for the producer as it means yields are high in terms of weight. It's a chalky white wool and takes natural and chemical dyes very well, especially pastel shades.

Shearing occurs at the end of October. This keeps the sheep in full wool over the show season, but, as the Mansfield area has bitter winters, Maureen feels it's kinder on the sheep. What many people don't realise is that during winter the pores in the skin of sheep are closed to minimise chilling, so often sheep are shorn at that time of year to take advantage of this. The pores open during the warmer months and if a cold snap occurs and the flock is newly shorn, there may be losses as the sheep's natural thermostat hasn't been able to kick in quickly enough. Winter shearing is believed by many farmers to facilitate good mothering with early spring lambing. It certainly makes access easier to the 'milk bar' for lambs and hygiene is improved during lambing.

Maureen puts aside the best fleeces for hand-spinners and craftspeople, but suggests if people want a particular fleece or type of wool they should touch base with breeders before shearing so special requirements can be met. For example, customers often buy from the same ewe year after year. Producers are generally happy to send off samples if asked, and Maureen says she never minds if customers come along during shearing to get a better look at the range available. All this can be arranged with your local breeder, but ringing first is advised.



Wool and wool products need careful storing to prevent damage by moths.

Storing and Buying Tips

How should your fleece be stored during the hot weather? An old tablecloth or sheet makes an ideal wrapping. Wool can be stored for years provided mothballs or camphor, or even soap, is used to deter moths. When fleece is tied up for any length of time it becomes stodgy to feel, but if popped out in a dry sunny spot to soften the lanolin it will be easy to handle again.

When purchasing wool, Maureen recommends taking a small sample, the size of your little finger, and quickly and vigorously flicking or snap-pulling it. Listen for a twang or snappy sound. A fleece may look clean and well

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defined, but can harbour a tender spot and break. Such a fleece will be no joy to spin so leave well alone. Where possible look to see there are not too many second cuts. Some do happen naturally, but bad shearing makes for many and again spinning will be difficult. If you are a serious wool user, you might want to take a finger-sized piece and wash it in cold water or under the tap. Hopefully, it will come up white, but if it still holds the yolk it will not take dyeing easily, especially with softer toned colours, though should be fine with dark colours. (Note – yolk is wool fat that protects the wool from the weather and makes the fibres feel greasy.)

EXOTIC AND LUXURIOUS

Alpacas produce a fleece that was described by ancient Incas as the 'fibre of the gods'. Karen Sampson from Boonah, Queensland, keeps a flock of delightful alpacas and says the fleece is used in garments, blankets and rugs. More hand-spinners are starting to use it, though it's usual for fleece to be commercially processed for knitting. Alpaca fibre is fantastically warm, light to wear and very fine. It has a luxurious feel and a nice shine.

Shearing is an annual activity and in Queensland occurs around September so animals don't suffer in the heat during summer. Karen says the best time for purchasing fleece is between shearing time and December because this is when small producers sell their 'yearly crop' to private spinners, weavers and knitters. You must be quick to get the best quality and the highly sought-after colours. If that's not possible, field days, fairs and shows are ideal places to meet up with local breeders and perhaps get a bargain.

You can purchase alpaca fibre in a wide range of colours and qualities.

Storing and Buying Tips

Fleece can be stored in plastic bags. Although Karen hasn't heard how long it can be kept, she assumes it's like wool so could be put away for several years. For would-be buyers, she also says breeders are happy for people to visit, but suggests prior to shearing may be best because then the fleeces of particular animals can be reserved. She also thinks craftspeople may get a better deal if they go to breeders directly rather than buying fleece from shops and stalls.

LONG AND LUSTROUS

English Leicester sheep were discussed in GR 156, and that issue's back cover featured a stunning example of the breed, a long-woolled sheep with spectacular long wavy locks. Margaret Kingman, the Secretary of the English Leicester Association, says the wool is used in felting, hand-knitting, weaving, packed wool rugs and for Santa beards and dolls' wigs. In fact, she says the only thing that limits its use is the buyer's imagination. The wool is long-stapled, up to 250 millimetres, soft-handling, and with a bright lustre that is second to none. It readily accepts dye and comes true to colour.

Most shearing takes place in the warm weather before grasses seed so the fleece is free of contamination. Shearing frequently occurs prior to lambing so the event is easier and more hygienic and facilitates suckling. Leicesters are a long-woolled breed and if in full wool they're less mobile and the little lambs have trouble finding the teats. Exhibitors of the breed time shearing in line with fleece length requirements for shows.

Storing and Buying Tips

Margaret says most breeders of specialty wool have fleece available any time, but that it makes sense to discuss requirements with suppliers and be guided by their advice. She finds a pillowcase or even a carton ideal for storing wool. Wool must be able to breathe so plastic bags are out, and it may be stored for a long time. Once again, if the wool hardens, soften it by placing the fleece outside in the sun.

The wavy locks of English Leicester are sought by craftspeople for dolls' hair and even Santa beards.

Margaret's advice on wool buying includes choosing clean, bright untangled fleece that is free of seeds and vegetable matter. It's best not to buy fleece from the backline of the sheep because it may lack tensile strength as a result of being the prime target of sun, rain and other sheep. Fleece from the sides and shoulders is the best.

SHORT AND SPRINGY

The sheep featured in the story on Ryelands in GR 155 belonged to Marrilyn and Des Stevens of

If you can't find a decent pillow or doona, consider making your own. The fleece from the Ryeland is short and very springy, perfect for pillows and cushions.

Hallylulya Ryeland Stud at Heywood in Victoria. Marrilyn says Ryeland wool is used for doonas and pillows, and is particularly suited to pillows and cushions because of its rebound properties. No head dips in pillows with Ryeland filling! It is also used as an under-filler for the true carpet wools because of its spongy quality. It can be hand-spun readily and knits up into hard-wearing garments, making great workwear for men.

The unique quality of Ryeland wool is its springiness; it quickly recovers its shape due to its cross fibres. As well, it's claimed to be the finest and truest of the Downs wools. The Downs sheep are short-woolled and include breeds like the Southdown, Dorset Down and Hampshire Down. They have short dense wool that is springy and full-handling.

Storing and Buying Tips

Shearing occurs in springtime and if *Grass Roots* readers want to obtain Ryeland wool for filling doonas or pillows, Marrilyn suggests they would need to order it in before spring to avoid disappointment. Her special tip for wool buyers is to test wool for strength before purchasing. Fleece from a hoggett (around a year old), would be Marrilyn's first choice. Avoid wool from older rams – it may have a ram's odour to it, which makes it very unpleasant to work with and can also cling to your clothing and be difficult to wash out.

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The flyer spins, the bobbin fills,
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Steady rhythm, constant flow,
Bobbins plying, flyer flying,
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Niddy nobby at the ready,
Skimming at the steady.

Soon to be tied,
Then to be dyed,
A rainbow spun,
A web to run,
The work is done.
Oh! What fun.

by Betty Moore.

Further Information:

Perendale wool: Secretary, Maureen Nissen, Australian Perendale Association, RMB 1476, Mansfield 3722. Ph/fax: 03-5777-3670.

Alpaca fibre: Karin Samson, Tranquil Mountain Alpacas, Boonah 4310. Ph/fax: 07-5463-5019. Email: samson@hypermax.net.au

English Leicester wool: Secretary, Margaret Kingman, English Leicester Association of Australia Inc, 40 Clark Rd, Tynong North 3813. Ph: 03-5942-8367. Website: www.ballaratweb.net/elaa/

Ryeland wool: Ryeland Sheepbreeders Association of Australia, Marrilyn Stevens, Hallylulya Ryelands, Heywood 3304. Ph: 03-5578-2311.

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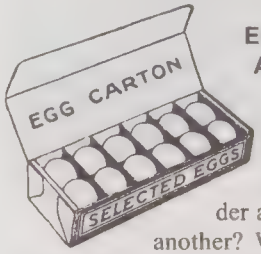
TABLE CHICKENS

We want to raise some chickens for the table but what can we give them that's free from antibiotics and hormones? They would be raised in a large deep litter shed and given lots of greens but we are at a loss as to how to feed them. Are there alternatives to proprietary products?

Liz and Barry Brown, GREENBANK 4124.

You will be relieved to know hormones haven't been added to poultry rations for at least 20 years, and that backyard pellets and crumble don't usually contain antibiotics. A coccidiostat is added to starter crumble and, generally, to grower rations to protect the chickens from coccidiosis in the period before natural immunity has built up. Many of the coccidiostats used are sulphur based and a withdrawal period of a month is recommended. What alternatives exist? You're fortunate you are in Queensland because there are several stock food producers that have chemical-free rations. Country Heritage Feeds has organic products and has designed rations to suit the different stages of development. You may be able to source a starter and a grower ration that have no added medicinal preventatives and then finish the chickens off with a whole grain mix. The cost will be greater than for traditional rations but is worth it because you're producing meat that is chemical free. You may be able to cut costs by sourcing grains yourself but household or restaurant scraps must not be fed or you will be contravening state regulations.



EGG SHAPE AND CHICK GENDER

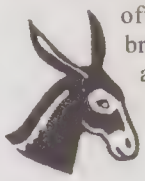
Is it true the pointed eggs are one gender and round eggs another? We're about to get a broody hen and wondered if we could increase the percentage of pullets. Help – and hurry, Miss Blackie is ready for the eggs right now! Sorry about the rush.

Kirsty Adams, MELVILLE 6156.

Sorry Kirsty, the shape of eggs doesn't necessarily relate to one or the other sex, it's an idiosyncrasy within the hens themselves. If you look closely, you will probably find particular hens lay distinctly shaped (or coloured) eggs, and so one or two hens may produce pointed ends and a couple of others, rounded ends. Test and try out the theory by setting equal numbers of pointed and rounded eggs, but you will have to devise a method for distinguishing between the two groups at hatching. A second broody would be ideal so you can divide up the pointed and round ended eggs.

DONKEY FEED

We enjoy GR and know some readers keep a donkey or two, so the following advice, taken from a copy of *Donkey Digest* (March 2002) might prove helpful. We haven't had problems when feeding bits and pieces to our donkeys, but clearly it pays to be informed and careful. A short piece, contributed by an administrator of a donkey shelter, highlighted the fact foods like bread, horse nuts, any pelleted animal product, chicken pellets and grains, windfall fruit and whole grains are deleterious to donkeys, precipitating fermentation in the gut or physical obstruction and possibly colic. The piece stressed the seriousness of fermentation, which releases toxins that can interfere with blood clotting and also affect the heart. No good news I'm afraid with using any of the food items listed above, and readers with poultry need to be particularly vigilant as the cunning donkey can often work out how to break into the fowl shed and get at the feed. Hope this proves helpful.



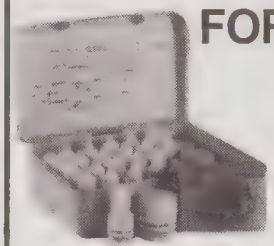
Shane Braken, DELAN 4671.

Poultry Breeders

We're looking for purebred breeders of the different poultry species to list in our next edition of the *Poultry Breeders Directory*.

Send a stamped SAE for an entry form to: Poultry Directory, PO Box 117, Seymour 3661.

ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES FOR ANIMALS



$98 Pet Power Pack First Aid Kit
$138 with flea, worming & heartworm prevention, plus book.
$40 only for flea, worming and heartworm energy.

Please contact Jackie Fitzgerald for other products available.

Jackie Fitzgerald: Homoeopath, Herbologist, Reiki Master.
Shop 4, 658 Pittwater Rd, Brookvale, NSW 2100, Australia.
Ph: 02-8902-3010 Fax: 02-9939-0404 Mobile: 0425-221-646

ECO NEWS

BRUSH-TAILED ROCK WALLABY

The brush-tailed rock wallaby has recently had its status lifted from vulnerable to endangered as numbers are continuing to decline. Since 1995 a 'Friends' of the rock wallaby group has been active in raising public awareness of the species' plight, encouraging community support and raising a considerable amount of money to fund research and field work. The Friends group is in need of new members to help it continue its valuable work of conserving this endangered species.

Contact Helen and John Jordan for more information about the wallaby or the Friends group at jmjordan@bigpond.com

Become a Friend of the brush-tailed rock wallaby and help ensure their survival.

HAIRY-NOSED WOMBAT

Only 110 animals are surviving of the northern hairy-nosed wombat species, now classed as critically endangered. In the latest conservation effort the entire population is about to be enclosed by a 20-kilometre-long 1.9-metre-high fence inside the Epping Forest National Park in central Queensland. Losses to dingoes have been high in recent years, so predators inside the fence are being shot and poisoned. To reduce stress on the species through drought conditions in this arid region water troughs and supplementary food are being provided.

GREEN WOOL GROWERS

Across central Victoria a three-year project is under way to demonstrate to wool growers that there are viable ways of managing native biodiversity while maintaining farm profitability. Real farms will be used as case studies looking at practical ways of maintaining a profitable commercial wool enterprise and conserving flora, fauna and ecosystems with minimal impact on farm finances. Costs and benefits will be highlighted to enable recommendations to be made to both farmers and policy makers. Each participating property will have a financial appraisal, flora and fauna survey and aerial mapping carried out. Monitoring of management practices and impacts on farm profits will be ongoing and participants will be kept informed of all information collected. Six farms are currently involved in two trial areas. Participants are still required from the Maryborough (central Vic) area.

Interested farmers can contact Jim Moll at the Benalla DPI on 03-5761-1619.

FERTILISER IMPACT

Overuse of nitrogen fertilisers has long been recognised as a major contributing factor to toxic blue-green algal blooms in waterways. Now, it seems, there is a link between nitrogen and another major agricultural and environmental problem. According to a recent report on Australia's land and water resources, agricultural productivity losses of up to $1.5 billion per year are resulting from soil acidity caused by nitrogen fertilisers.

LAND CLEARING – GOOD NEWS

Previous 'Eco News' pages have reported on the extent and consequences of rapacious land clearing, especially in Queensland and NSW. Now, at last, there is some cause for optimism. In NSW Premier Carr has announced funding of $120 million in a plan to end clearing of mature bushland and protect important areas of regrowth. There will also be financial assistance to farmers for conservation works. There are plans afoot to end broadscale clearing in Queensland. An agreement has been reached between the Prime Minister and Queensland's Premier Beattie to spend $150 million to immediately protect threatened vegetation types and to phase out clearing of remnant vegetation by 2006. In both states it is very early days and it will be interesting to see just how the plans are implemented. Support from private land managers will be crucial to their success.

RIVER RESTORATION

Increasingly, private companies are realising their social and environmental obligations and putting resources towards environmentally beneficial projects. Bundaberg Rum has recently established a fund of $150,000 for community grants being made available to environment groups for works aimed at improving water quality. Any community group involved in restoration of waterways is eligible to apply.

For more information visit the website: www.bundabergrum.com.au

RED GUMS UNDER THREAT

A recent CSIRO report has found that about 80 percent of the river red gums on the River Murray floodplain downstream of Mildura are stressed, 20 to 30 percent of them severely so. The area of affected trees stretches along an astounding 900 kilometres of the river. Years of drought added to the ever increasing quantities of water being removed from the Murray for irrigation are depriving the red gums of the regular flooding they need for their survival. Historically, the red gums were flooded 79 years in every 100; now it is 30 years out of 100. Presently, most of the Murray floodplains have not been flooded since 1993. Over 300 vertebrate species depend on the survival of the red gums. Increased environmental flows are crucial to restoring the health of the red gums and of the whole riparian ecosystem. Floodplain rehabilitation projects are underway in some areas to restore flooding regimes, but an integrated, long-term approach for the whole river system is the only solution to avert environmental catastrophe.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots & Readers,

My occupation might at first seem to be the opposite of *Grass Roots's* simple and eco-friendly approach: I build and program up computers for a living. Nevertheless, computers have a place in the efficient operation of even simple households, and, like many technologies, can often be applied to remove or **REDUCE THE IMPACT** of themselves and of other high-tech appliances. Another example of a high-tech answer to a relatively low-tech problem is a solar panel. To install and operate, they are very simple. To produce them efficiently requires a very detailed and complex procedure with correspondingly complex machinery behind it.

A WA company named Motium has developed and is about to market a computer about half the size of a shoe box and which will also run from 12 volts. The computer is entirely fanless, so there's only one moving part (the hard disk) to worry about, will cost about half as much as a laptop, and by itself uses about 15 watts at full blast – less than a tenth of the consumption of the desktop system this letter is being composed on. Adding an efficient flat-screen about doubles the power consumption (when it's on).

Computers have a fair amount of embodied energy, but even so can save considerable energy (and trees) over their lifetime by communicating via email instead of paper and photos, record-keeping in a database instead of a ledger, and so on.

If you use your computer a lot, it could be worth leaving it on and having it monitor and manage things for you (temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction, solar panel output, soil moisture, fridge door activity and temperature, lights). The small motors and solenoids often found in video recorders at the kerbside on council chuck-out days are often 12 volt and so can be used for things like operating ventilators, locking or unlocking chook house doors, tilting solar or shade panels and agitating water.

Because I use Linux throughout, I don't have to worry about the machine crashing if I leave it on. I've come back to undisturbed editing sessions on my clients' servers many months after my previous visit. Linux also manages disk and processor usage more efficiently than MS DOS or Windows, so Linux uses less power and helps the equipment to last longer.

Setting up little scripts to check on and change things regularly is straightforward, and you can 'talk' to the devices you're monitoring through simple additions to the machine's serial (modem) or parallel (printer) ports.

More complex arrangements (such as if you want to monitor or control lots of things spread over a wide area) can be handled with cheap little microcontroller chips (down to about $10 or $20 each retail) and a 'multidrop serial' or 'relay' arrangement. These bright little devices can do simple but useful things like watch some points at the perimeter of a solar array, do intelligent tracking, and warn you if it's being shaded (time to prune), or if the output drops while the sun's still shining (maybe an electrical fault). You can 'pot' them in epoxy and bury or drown them in the most inhospitable places. With your computer reading the sensors every so often (a task it can 'wake up' periodically to do), you can also build up statistics and be warned of long-term trends before anything bad happens.

Leon,
8 Kelso Plc, DUNCRAIG 6023.

Dear GR,

Does anyone know where I can obtain **DWARF PAWPAW SEEDS**? You are the only ones I could think of who would be able to find out this info.

Camille Fogarty,
PMB 197, TIMBER CREEK 0852.

Dear Grass Roots,

We have been reading *Grass Roots* for many years now and have always enjoyed the stories of people **TRAVELLING AROUND AUSTRALIA**. Next year we start our trip, a 10-month journey travelling from Canberra down the east coast and then across to Tasmania. We will then follow the coast road all the way to the Northern Territory via South and Western Australia. We plan on arriving around Rockhampton in August, and then spending a few months in northern NSW looking for our few acres of land.

We would love to hear from any readers who have made a similar trip and can offer any advice. We will be home-tutoring a nine-year-old. Should we buy a pop-top caravan or a camping trailer? Places to see, places to avoid? Is camping in remote national parks safe? To WWOOF or not to WWOOF? Good places to WWOOF, bad places to WWOOF? All advice appreciated.

Stephen Currie,
41 Salsola St, RIVETT 2611.
Email: scurrie@webone.com.au

Dear GR Readers,

We are a **HOME-SCHOOLING FAMILY** travelling the Queensland coast by yacht. We are looking for a **COASTAL COMMUNITY** to eventually reside in. We'd love to find one that has local home-schoolers and an environmentally aware philosophy. We are hoping to winter over in the Whitsundays area. Unfortunately, we can only be contacted by email at present but would love any contacts of interest.

Ange.
Email: svmanuhiri@hotmail.com

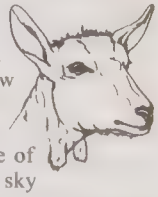
Dear GR Readers,

I wish to thank GR and its readers for their information on Tasmania after my hubby last wrote. We made the move in August 2002 and settled on a quarter-acre property in the north-west coast eight kilometres out of Ulverstone. We have established a chook yard and vegie garden. I have planted fruit trees (which fruited) and created flower beds where there were none. I am surprised how well everything grows, though I have had some misses. We are glad we made the move though we came for the weather and the rest is a bonus.

Now I find I need GR once again to help me find a **KOMBUCHA TEA CULTURE** to aid me with very annoying dermatitis in my hairline. If anyone can help me obtain a culture I would be most thankful. Again, thank you GR – keep up the good work.

Joy Nugent,
574 Preston Main Rd, NORTH MOTTON 7315.

Dear Grass Roots,



Thanks for your great magazine; I have been a reader for 15 years and look forward to each new issue appearing in the shops. Having lived on the south coast, Gympie, Queensland and now the Snowy Mountains, I have finally found my piece of paradise. The climate is so changeable and the sky can be so dramatic it's beautiful. We keep sheep, milking goats, chooks and two champion dogs. My garden and lifestyle have always followed organic principles, eating healthy produce and making my own bread, cheese and yoghurt. I am a member of the Diggers Seed Club and try to save many seeds of my own each year. Can anyone supply me with a recipe for **GOATS' MILK SOAP**?

Living the good life.

Gail DeCent,
PO Box 49, ADAMINABY 2630.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

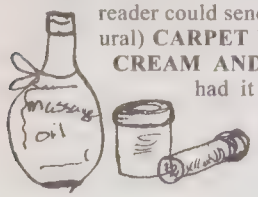
Dear GR,

Thank you to everyone who wrote for the recipes I mentioned in my last letters, but no more letters please as we are on the move and may not get them. I will put the recipes in GR in another issue.

Mrs A Vivarelli,
PO Box 6011, KATOOMBA 2780.

Hello GR Readers,

I enjoy the magazine – the information is great and I'm always learning something new. I'm always amazed at the wealth of knowledge that the readers and staff of GR share. I'd love it if any reader could send me information on how to make (natural) **CARPET DEODORISER, HAND AND BODY CREAM AND MASSAGE OIL**. You've probably had it in the magazine and I've missed it. Thank you so much for the great read.



L Christie,
3 Henry St, TIGHES HILL 2297.

Dear Grass Roots,

We have recently moved to north Queensland from WA and are lucky enough to have found a home that has a yard full of tropical fruit trees. Among these fruit trees is a **CHOCOLATE SAPOTE**. I have dried some and it is really lovely, but I'm not sure what else can be done with it. If any readers have some recipes, I would love to hear from them. My other request is for aloe vera recipes. We have so much growing. I would like to make soap, shampoo and body creams. Thanks for an informative magazine.

Jeanette Harley,
C/- Post Office, WALKAMIN 4872.

Dear GR Friends,

I am sitting in my air-conditioned work office, having just been yelled at by a customer who wouldn't give me enough details to help him, and I wonder again, what am I doing here? I am bored. Does anyone have any ideas or processes that will help me to work out what it is that I really want to do as a job? And with the rest of my life for that matter. I feel that at 35 (almost 36) I have **LOST MY ZEST FOR LIFE** and the passion I remember from my early 20s that makes life exciting and worthwhile. Does anyone have a recipe for getting it back? Or maybe just some words of wisdom to share?

On another subject, can I have a permaculture-type garden and a boisterous Blue Heeler cross as well? Lots of 'traditional' garden magazines/garden centres have said that if you have a dog you can't have a garden. I have fenced off (with chicken wire) a small part of my large backyard for some grevilleas and banksias for the birds. Does anyone else have any other suggestions? Can anyone recommend a permaculture book that might suit. I am an absolute beginner! Love the mag – it is a breath of fresh air and so inspirational!

Liz,
8 Maydell Way, CALISTA 6167.

Liz, dogs and gardens can co-exist. However, the dog must be trained so it knows to keep off garden areas; it should have its own areas where it is permitted. Alternatively, fence off areas you don't want the dog to trample.

Dear GR,

Last winter I bought 3½ acres that was advertised in GR 152. I moved from **NEWCASTLE TO THE UPPER DERWENT IN TASMANIA** and have not looked back since. It was a bit spooky moving almost halfway across the country, but things have fallen into place fantastically. Ellendale is possibly one of the prettiest places I have ever seen; it looks a little like a country village in rural Britain or Ireland with some of the cheapest good quality land in Australia. I paid $55,000 for a three-bedroom house and acres and heaps of heritage fruit trees right next to the shop/PO.

There is still lots of work to do on the gardens and to apply my recently acquired skill of preserving the heap of organic fruit that grows here. I can't wait for winter because we sometimes get snow here, being about 10 kilometres from the ski slopes of Mount Field National Park with Russell Falls.

It's surprising how well vegies grow here. Some of my friends up north think that the growing season must be too short, but people produce more here in the seven frost-free months than I ever did up north.

I am so glad that I took the plunge and moved to the country. Anyone thinking the same, please do your homework well, research the intended area, and go for it!

Bruce Nelson,
920 Main Rd, ELLENDALE 7140.
Ph: 03-6288-1224.

Dear Grass Roots Community,

Thank you for inspiring me every time I open the new edition of GR. I am a young woman aspiring to be an **INDEPENDENT HOMEBIRTH MIDWIFE**. Having completed my nursing degree, I am now currently learning and incorporating into my life the ancient art of being a Doula. I wish to connect with women of all ages and paths who have embarked on a similar journey and reached their goal, or who wish to share their birthing experiences with me. I am actively seeking the right place to learn midwifery with focus on natural homebirthing. I am firm in the belief that women's bodies are designed to birth and heal themselves, if only we would listen to them more. I eagerly await your correspondence.

Sarah Henke,
41 Solomon St, FREMANTLE 6162.

Dear GR Readers,

I have a **GRANADILLA PLANT**. It is bearing large fruit (green). I'm wanting feedback on when it is mature and how it is used. Please write.

Ben Buemi,
51 Mooloolah Drv, MINYAMA 4575.
Ph: 07-5444-8321.

Ben, we have had articles about growing and using granadillas in GRs 112 and 150.

Dear GR Friends,

I'd like to thank everyone involved for producing such a great magazine. I guess we (mum, dad and four children 8½, 6, 3 and 20 months) have the same dreams as most of you out there. We are having fun practising on our **SUBURBAN HAVEN**, but are hoping to purchase some land soon. We just need to finish our house renovations. If anybody has any land, with or without a house, within two hours of the Cessnock/Maitland area in the Hunter Valley, that they might be thinking of selling in a couple of years please let us know. We hope to have a fair deposit when we sell our house. We would prefer a minimum of 10 acres, with some sort of power and phone, but will gratefully consider anything and anywhere. We were also interested in the Chinchilla/Tara area in Queensland. Property there seems to be reasonably cheap. If anyone has any information, good or bad, on this area we would appreciate your help.

I will answer all letters including anyone who would like to write on other topics. Good health to all.

Julie & Family,
6 Wallsend St, STANFORD MERTHYR 2327.

Contributors and correspondents who want letters or articles returned are requested to include correct postage.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Greetings,

My husband, baby Cooper and I are looking for a **WELCOMING, DYNAMIC COMMUNITY** to move to. After a lifetime in the same suburb of a large town (Geelong, Victoria), following a predictably 'grey' life path, we are looking to move into the sunshine and enjoy an outdoors, community-based future in a coastal/country town.

Myself (a teacher) and Geoff (a nurse) wish to move to acreage in a coastal (up to 30 minutes inland) town that provides quality schooling, has a range of sporting and community groups and a **FRIENDLY LOCAL PUB**! (Geoff's English blood needs a regular tipple.)

If you know of the ideal community with affordable property ($250,000ish) and employment prospects, please drop us a line.

Jodie, Geoff & Cooper Towne,
20 Kana St, GROVEDALE 3216.
Email: townec@bigpond.com

Hi Megg, Mary & Fellow Workers,

I've just been wondering if it's an age thing or does everyone suddenly get an urge to do a purge of a room or cupboard that has got beyond the point of no return. Normally I can ignore a bit of dust, the odd thousand or two cobwebs and the general clutter of things that I might need at any moment, but just lately I haven't been able to cope with this anymore. I have what is jokingly called the 'sewing room', except it holds a lot more than the machine of course. It's been the general recipient of every single thing I couldn't squash in anywhere else.

My mad urge to get rid of all extraneous matter got so bad that I leapt in (OK, waddled in) and started turfing things out. My husband, who is very tidy, couldn't wait to hand me large garbage bags and boxes, which he cheerfully carted out to the shed to then be sorted out by a visiting daughter and moved from the premises. Bags of Tupperware, craft books I'll never live long enough to use, and, best of all the 'bit bag'. Now, anyone out there who sews or has sewn over the years will know what that is. Inside that bag is stuffed all the leftover bits of material after one has cut out the dress, coat, nightie, skirt etc. Over many years this comes to quite a lot. I have disposed of it, of course, many times. However, having been slack for the last four or five years I hadn't really thought about this set of bulging bags in the corner of the cupboard. What a treasure trove I found and I'm glad to say it was greeted with delight by my 17-year-old granddaughter, who immediately knew of a million things she could use all these bits for. I remember my mother always having a bit bag, which, as a child, I too delighted in. I made dollies' pants and dresses and bonnets, all decorated with scraps of lace, and it kept me amused on those cold wet days in England. My two daughters were born and raised in New Zealand and did the same thing, but I didn't think for one moment that once again that bag of oddments would find a place with a teenager. So, any of you who have that cupboard, room or corner that perhaps one day you might feel the 'urge to purge', maybe you too might have that most desirable item – the bit bag.

Jackie Pavese,
COOROY 4563.

Dear Megg & GR Readers,

I am a long-time reader of GR, but am saddened not to be able to get issues 1 to 49. Can anyone help us? We are willing to pay a reasonable amount for them.

I like my mother-in-law, but not mother-in-law's tongue (garden variety). We need help to rid us of them.

Also, we need an answer to a very **SMELLY AGED DOG** (14 years). She stinks as if she has rolled in a dead animal, even after a bath. Tried everything; can anyone help?

P & M O'Brien,
MS 895 Rutlands Rd, VIA MACKAY 4741.

Dear GRs,

A recent 'Catalyst' ABC TV program on **SEAWEEDS** got me thinking about how we in Australia, with the world's richest biodiversity and quantity of seaweed, ignore this multi-billion dollar resource. All seaweeds are edible, but you might not like the flavour of some. Also, different species are prepared and cooked in different ways, as is indicated in many Japanese books on the subject. If you don't read Japanese there is one in English: *Sea Vegetables*, by Evelyn McConnaughey, published by Naturegraph, California, 1985, ISBN 0-87961-150-2. (I'll pay for a new or second-hand copy.) The Internet could also be a source.

TYRE HOUSE WALLS UPDATE: For more info a reader has sent me Michael Reynolds' website: www.earthship.org Also, same reader suggests fences made of stacked tyres overlapping each row to give a bonding influence with two-metre-long occasional steel star pickets to help stabilise the structure. Also noted was the error in my article in GR 156 of the eight rows of tyres for house walls instead of eighteen. Leaching of the metal zinc from tyres is a problem in some countries, but probably not Australia because our soils are deficient in zinc and therefore so are our vegies.

I was pleased to read that the **TYRE WALL HOUSE** builders had such universal council acceptance. It's good to hear of changes of attitudes towards sensible nontraditional alternatives. The only hands-on experience with this type of building I've had was in the early 1970s. I was one of a team of young enthusiastic designer-builders who built some houses in the San Bernardino Valley Hills in California. I was on a working holiday recovering from tertiary education blues and the hippy happening was in full swing there.

We used labour/time saving tools such as concrete mixers, adjustable tampers similar to kangas, which you could moderate to suit your needs, electric drills and so on. Yes, you could do it all by hand, but, personally, I can't see why, unless you need the exercise. We used a fairly dry mix to reduce loss and cracks and speed placement of tyre fill. It was an earthquake zone so we incorporated slab-to-roof steel rod reinforcement too. This would also be wise in cyclone or tornado areas to tie everything together. Obviously you will choose the method that suits you best, but, having been in the building industry for more than 35 years around the world, I am aware that there are many ways to build a dwelling. More info on alternative building methods is on the web: www.earthship.org and www.earth-house.com and there are no doubt lots more.

If I were building a tyre wall house in the bush I would want a fire-proofing external render because I've seen how furiously tyres burn. I'm sure that house insurance companies would appreciate this detail also. I would have at least an 80-millimetre cover of render externally to give the wall a fire rating of sorts. Also, knowing that tyres are a bit smelly I'd render internally – that's my choice.

When approaching councils for building approvals, or lending bodies for home loans, it's wise to have all your documentation complete rather than to go off half-cocked, especially with nontraditional houses.

Sixteen to eighteen courses of tyres is approximately what you will require to achieve 2.4 metres height. Tyres vary in size so be warned and double check.

Roberino,
PO Box 359, WOOLGOOLGA 2456.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

Thanks for a great magazine. We need help. We live on a 62-acre hobby farm and are trying very hard to become self-sufficient by growing our own vegetables as organically as possible. **OUR PROBLEM IS SANDY SOIL.** Is there anyone who has had success by turning the sand into good soil?

Also, does anyone know of a foolproof way to keep lice and mites away from our chickens? (They don't like garlic.)

To Florrie and her 'smelly towels': Wash the towels after each use and make sure you rinse thoroughly with fabric softener. Make sure they are completely dry before folding them.

Marilyn Colombo,
PO Box 72, SORELL 7172.

We had an article in GR 150 April/May 2002 on 'Controlling Poultry Mites' which should be of help to you.

Howdy GR,

I am writing hoping to receive some tips. I am hoping to establish a more fulfilling lifestyle than my Brisbane unit is offering. Rent is high, allergies are developing due to city air and pollution. Any properties for sale within three-quarters of an hour of **IPSWICH OR BRISBANE**? Minimum one-half acre, water is a must. I can provide a reasonable deposit if anyone can provide vendor finance. I have excellent references and a good job. Building permit necessary. Also, my daughter had a case of **HEAD LICE**. After treatment they moved on, but my little girl still scratches and it is causing rashes. Doctors' ointments have only offered short-term relief. Has anyone got any ideas about herbal or alternative treatments for this problem? Any help much appreciated.

Cathy Green,
4/14 Paragon St, YERONGA 4104.

Dear GR,

Well, instead of just talking about it, here **I AM IN TASMANIA**, from WA, and loving it. Never mind the wind screaming around the place. I drove over in my Mazda 121 with my two dogs in the back, not a trouble in the world, and the car is still going like a dream – all 18 years old of it.

To my deep sorrow, in hindsight, I left my four cats in what I thought were capable hands and the woman has let two escape. Looking back, how I wish I'd stuffed them all in the car. In the meantime I have my other two cats here with me now. A month later I'm still recovering from their air fares!

I have most certainly escaped the summer heat of Perth. It is cold and not even winter yet. This is a very quiet little township, which is great. I'm probably on the move again though. I'm spending a fortune on petrol to get to where shopping is less expensive than the local shop – the only one in town – and to a doctor and other services.

Next week a friend is driving me to Hobart to pick up my belongings and on the trip I plan to have a look at a place for sale in Cambelltown. Much more central – and I just hope there is a vet there.

Pat Lever,
C/- Post Office, GLADSTONE 7264.

Dear Fellow GRs,

I have recently made the move and brought 120 acres of undulating land on the New England Range near Glen Innes. The land has soil of sandy loam. The climate is rare: cold/warm summers and freezing winters. I would like to know whether **OLIVE TREES** would like this environment. I am interested in finding out the best variety for oil, methods of extracting oil and where to purchase mature trees.

Also, does anyone know of any **HERBAL TREATMENTS** for **DEPRESSION AND FERTILITY**? St John's wort makes me quite ill, so unfortunately I have to find something else. I am also embarking on home-schooling my five-year-old beautiful girl Shania. Any tips on lesson procedures? Would any other mothers and siblings like to correspond? Home-schooling does occasionally become lonely for my little girl, but receiving notes from other children boosts her day. On a finishing note, thanks for all the useful information GR.

Catherine Cameron,
5 Killarney St, REDBANK PLAINS 4301.

Dear Grass Roots Readers,

I am writing in to say a special thank you to all those wonderful women who wrote to me regarding my queries on menopause. I received so many replies that I wanted to acknowledge my heartfelt thanks to you all, especially Ruth Robertson for sending me her book. I was just overwhelmed by the response. So thank you to all you wonderful women. Now on to my next request. Does anyone have any patterns for **MACRAMÉ POT PLANT HOLDERS**? They seem to have completely disappeared from the market. Also, I am having trouble getting hold of the macramé yarn (jute). The shops don't seem to stock it anymore. Thanks to all and take care.

Tina Marsh,
63 Crescent Ave, HOPE ISLAND 4212.
Email: brentina@winshop.com.au

Dear GR Readers,

A quick note in response to GR 155 Feb/Mar 2003 article in Feedback on **PSORIASIS**. My mother has had this all her life (78 years) and always believed it was caused from what she was eating. However, no one could tell her what food it was. When visiting a chiropractor one day she asked him. His reply was – cut all acids out of the diet (includes citrus fruit, strawberries, tomatoes that are not acid free) and don't each chicken or pork as these have a lot more protein than other meats. If she eats any of these foods she breaks out with the psoriasis, if she stays away from them she doesn't have it. I'm not sure how the reaction would be to high-protein foods such as soya beans etc. It would be trial and error. She also stays away from dairy products. Hope this might be of some help to all those sufferers of psoriasis.

Jenny,
PO Box 847, STRATHALBYN 5255.

Jenny, perhaps it is some other constituent of chicken and pork affecting your mother's psoriasis. According to our reference ('What Food Is That? And How Healthy Is It?', by Jo Rogers) the following are approximate percentages of protein in some different meat cuts: chicken, 28%; pork fillet, 32%; pork leg, 31%; beef fillet, 30%; beef shin, 35%; lamb leg, 30%.

Dear Readers,

Can anyone please help me? I am trying to trace the telephone number or postal address of the distributors of **WATER WISE AND PURE MAGIC STEAM WATER DISTILLERS** as mentioned in GR 126, page 74. The distributor's name is Ron Rowe (Australian distributor). The phone number given no longer belongs to this business and I would very much appreciate any help anyone might be able to give me in this matter. Alternatively, is there any other brand of good quality steam water distiller?

Gordon Watson,
2 Menindee Crt, LILYDALE 3140.

Please keep letters brief, clearly written and relevant to self-sufficiency topics. Letters pushing barrows (religious, political or other) will not be published.

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Each October/November we print an index to the previous six issues to make information easier to access in GR. If you have missed out on any information contained in this index, back copies are available for $5 each.
See details of how to order on page 82.

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◆ – article (quarter page or more)
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Each binder is rich burgundy complemented by a white Grass Roots logo. Each one holds 10 issues. $15.80 plus $4 p&h.

See page 82 for order form.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR,

In reply to Roberino, GR 157: quassia chips are expensive and the water solution washes off easily.

Last year I visited a magnificent garden at Scamander on the Tasmanian east coast. It was at least an acre, with paths leading to secluded areas, wonderful trees, vine-covered love seat, pergola, garden shed – it's even used for weddings. The couple who have created it (and it is still expanding) have wonderful fruit trees fed from greywater, and rows and rows of berries, grapes etc. They use a mixture of **CHILLI POWDER AND FAT** to smear on trees, posts etc. It doesn't wash off as easily, and **NO MORE POSSUMS OR RABBITS.**

Jo McRae,
5 Langford Crt,
LENAH VALLEY 7008.

Dear Megg & Mary,

Whenever I run out of reading matter I turn to old issues of GR, the most recent was GR 127 (June/July 1998), particularly the article on pyramid power by Marly Wright. At the time of the publication my husband made a pyramid to exact specifications and positioned it precisely: He put it under his chair at the dinner table. Then he made another two – one under his armchair and one under his side of the bed.

Marly's article ended with the words: 'When you find the right spot, something will happen, believe me!' Well! Things certainly did happen, unfortunately not good things. Within a month we had a claim on our contents insurance due to accidental damage, breakages etc. Then our vehicle cost us a bomb for unexpected repairs. I warned my husband of where his pyramid would end up if he ever made another one!

I decided to write this letter and had the GR issue near my computer for about two weeks. Last night I realised we have had a terrible week, necessitating in two urgent trips to our nearest 'city' (90 kilometres return). Coincidence? Maybe. I have now put the magazine back with the others away from our living area. I don't think we will stop reading them though, so keep up the good work.

Shirley & Lionel Arendt,
PO Box 50, PIANGIL 3597.

Dear GR & Friends,

Once again I have more **SEED TO GIVE AWAY**. You send prestamped addressed envelope (business size) and I will endeavour to send the seeds on. For the small tree grower I have an abundance of seed from a red-flowered callistemon, also *Melaleuca armillaris*, *Eucalyptus citriodora*, Queensland Blue Cross (pumpkin), continental cucumber and jam melon seed and a lot of other melon and vegetable lines. I have a huge amount of mixed annual flower seeds, mixed small gourds and tobacco seed, some *Eucalyptus fushiana* (fushia gum) and much much more.

With the tobacco I grow, I let the leaves mature, then I pick them and boil them up in water and use the end product as a bug spray for all the trees that I grow (thousands of them).

I have just stewed up a heap of prickly pears with jam melon and put it in the freezer for pies later on. In fact, my freezer is chock-a-block with only frozen stewed fruit.

The last time I had seed to give away I had over 2000 requests and I don't think I missed anybody. I also thought I had gained about three penfriends from the exercise, but do think I became far too boring in the end and they don't seem to write anymore. I'm always thinking about designing and building my inventions and I think people get sick of hearing about them.

I also like solving other people's problems with whatever they are trying to build, as I have built a lot of machinery and gadgets during my life, so have a good idea of what will and what won't work. Really, I could write several books on what I have built and the theories behind each one.

Also, I don't only like writing to people, so have included my phone number for people who would just like to talk, but be aware that if I'm not near the phone I have some pretty ridiculous answering machine messages. Love all the letters in Feedback, great magazine – wish it was fortnightly.

Ian Webb,
12 Whipstick Rd, EAGLEHAWK 3556.
Ph: 03-5446-7312.

Hello Everyone at GR,

This is my very first letter although I have been buying this wonderful magazine for as long as I can remember. GR 13 is the first one we acquired at a market somewhere, then we found GR 17 and were well and truly hooked. We now have quite a collection of them but we are missing a few.

My reason for writing is to tell you all that we are about to achieve a dream we have had for many years. We have wanted to go to live in Tasmania for the last 14 years, but there was always something getting in the way. Well, that has changed and now **TASSIE HERE WE COME**.

We first put our house on the market in November 2002. Lots of cleaning up beforehand, sparkling windows, candles burning, everything squeaky clean, nothing out of place; we chose our real estate agent, who said we would have no trouble selling, ha, ha. But . . . we had a sale within 10 days, subject to the other party selling their house within a month. The month dragged on and suddenly we were at the last day and bingo, the lady had a sale, but the man buying from her had a three-day cooling off period of course, and you guessed it – the sale fell through. Well, you can imagine how we felt, especially as the agent had put a sold sign out the front of the house. After the obligatory 90 days we changed agents.

The new agents were fantastic, bringing in lots of prospective buyers. Finally, after five weeks we had an offer. After some negotiations the deed was done. All we are waiting on now is a satisfactory termite inspection. I'll keep you posted.

Margaret Blair,
13 Deakin Cres, BAXTER 3911.
Email: margblair13@hotmail.com

Dear Grass Roots & Readers,

I have been reading GR for about 11 years now. It seems to be in short supply at the newsagents, so I have a 'sit-in' at the library for a couple of hours and catch up on the latest news.

As a sole parent, I have raised six children. All have left home but one. My youngest son (just turned 23) and I live in a government house. The commission wants my house for a younger family, so they want me to move into a single-bedroom flat. It's what I call a dog kennel on death row! Ever see 'Waiting for God' on ABC? My life is not that funny, and I'm not that old at 50!

Has anyone got a spare house? A vacant house anywhere in the country, a deceased estate, or the old farmhouse left empty after the new one was built. I would dearly love to buy a home with a few acres on vendor terms, rent/buy basis.

I'm currently waiting to do my third foster parent training course. My dream come true would be to live in the country with my son, raise some chooks, grow my own vegies and foster children in country fresh air and sunshine.

F Johnson,
13 Wilson Crt, MILDURA 3500.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

G'day all you Grass Rooters & G'day Mary Horsfall,

I'm enclosing a photo of my **CACTUS FLOWERS** that I had never seen before. The big cactus is about six metres tall and had, in batches, around 300 blooms like oversized strawberry flowers. They open at daylight and by about 10 o'clock they've wilted and are no more. While they are open hundreds and hundreds of native bees and honey bees, and even some bumble bees, are busy. I have no idea if they produce seeds? How do they spread?

All the best to you and your team, you're doing a great job.

Jack Jacob,
PO Box 140, COOKTOWN 4871.

A Grass Roots Tale,

I received GR 157 magazine today. Hasn't time flown? Thirty years of publication – well done! Thought readers might be interested in this method of **TREATING DOG FLEAS**, Queensland itch or mange that I adapted from an old *Mother Earth* magazine.

Buy some sulphur powder from the chemist (not expensive), mix with vaseline and rub it on twice a day. After a week bathe the dog. It will be completely healed with healthy skin. After a few weeks the hair will grow back.

Theresa Powe,
9 Kerstin Crt, ROCHEDALE SOUTH 4123.

Dear GR Readers,

I have read *Grass Roots* for many years and enjoy the wonderful, yet seemingly contradictory, combination of unity and diversity.

I am a creative writing tutor and I constantly heard my writing friends express their disappointment at the scarcity of opportunities to have their work published. Unfortunately, many of them felt, quite wrongly, that they were no good. With this in mind, and after a personal setback of my own, I decided to turn some negatives into positives and last year launched a monthly magazine for creative writers, which I hope will provide some opportunities for creative writers all over Australia. It has been aptly named **POSITIVE WORDS** and is already attracting subscribers and contributors from all states.

I have a background in journalism (before having children), have been attending writing groups and workshops for many years and this year began tutoring several groups at neighbourhood houses. The range of talent is wonderful. Launching the magazine has been both exciting and a little scary, an incredible dream! I was once so shy I would barely say 'boo' in public and, now at 42, I am tutoring, canvassing advertisers, speaking daily to contributors seeking my advice and recently survived a live radio interview quite competently! As it is self-funded, I am running on a shoestring budget at present, but the response has been very encouraging.

Positive Words features a wide range of poetry, short stories (under 1000 words at this stage), informative articles, a penfriends column, hints and a young writers page. The price has been kept as low as possible ($4.40 per issue, postage included) to make it affordable for everyone. I also have a number of back issues available for interested writers/readers if they send $2 worth of unused stamps. Money orders and cheques are so expensive.

As a single mother who raised four children I know how tight finances can be sometimes. To raise the initial capital I relied on my 'grass roots' skills and sold my crafts, plants and fresh vegies at local markets, and fresh eggs and lemon butter to my friends.

If any readers would like further information, to subscribe or submit, contact me. Please include an SAE.

Sandra Lynn,
466 Old Melbourne Rd, TRARALGON 3844.

Dear GRs,

Regarding some enquiries in your last issue: Plain carb soda makes a good underarm deodorant. Instead of HRT, mistletoe is very good for young or older women. It helps the reproductive area, balances hormones and helps blood circulation. It only has medicinal properties in spring and autumn or when flowering. Dried in the shade, it can be kept for two years in a light-proof container. Heat destroys its medicinal properties so it is used as a cold infusion and should be soaked for six to eight hours before use. Use a handful of leaves to one to two litres of cold water. Take a small glassful morning and evening when needed. *Health Through Gods Pharmacy*, by Maria Treben, is an excellent book for herbal remedies.

I would like to tell you what I have found out regarding the mineral/gemstone **HEMATITE**. It seems to work on most kinds of everyday pain for most people (not indigestion, tiger eye helps this). It also works on animals – for arthritis or injury pain – as a stone tied to a collar or placed in the top layer of the bedding. As a pendant worn around the neck it helps asthma, sinus and headaches/migraines. As a necklace it will also help neck and shoulder pain and stiffness. As a bracelet it helps pain and stiffness from fingers to and including the shoulder of the arm on which it is worn. As an anklet, or a medium sized stone in the leg pocket, it will help pain from foot to waist in the leg on which it is worn. Worn on the back of the waist, or carried in the back pocket, it helps back pain. I have seen astounding results with it, and only a few people that it didn't help. I think it works on an ion exchange because after a while the energy is discharged. If placed outside on the ground in a storm or when the air is static it will be recharged. There are also other methods to recharge. Quite a lot of people are now interested in crystal healing, but not everyone knows about this aspect of hematite.

Mrs Nola Bredereck,
PO Box 163, COONABARABRAN 2357.

Dear Grass Roots,

Can anyone tell us how to **REPAIR A CONCRETE WATER TANK** from the outside while it is still full of water. Water seeps through very small cracks in the tank, which is our only water source, therefore we do not want to drain it.

Ruth & Alf Burton,
52 Brother View Ln, HANNAM VALE 2443.

One of our 'Grass Roots' advertisers could have a product that suits your needs. Contact: Tech-Dry, 177-179 Coventry St, South Melbourne 3205. You can phone the NSW distributor on : 02-9482-3360.

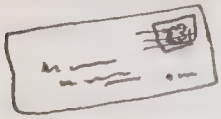
Anonymous letters will not be published. Please indicate if you would like personal details to be withheld.

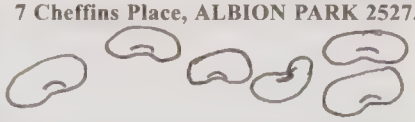
FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

I have a surplus of **SEVEN YEAR BEANS** (Scarlet Runner Beans), which grow well in the cooler parts of Australia. For five free seeds, send a business size stamped addressed envelope to the address below by the end of November.

Seven Year Beans,
7 Cheffins Place, ALBION PARK 2527.





Hello Megg & Mary,

With regard to Allie with her **AGA STOVE**: If it has been converted to gas, just make sure that not too much damage has been done to the firewall. First, you need to find out whether it's been used for bottled gas or natural gas as they both have different types of gas jets to convert it back to a wood burner. You will need to find a way of fixing the firewall. The next thing is to get it checked by a licenced gas fitter. To run it as just a wood, coke or charcoal burner is as dear as your present stove, but once they reach temperature they will keep it. They eat up the wood, but are excellent cookers. It depends on how much you want to spend on it. Otherwise it could make a good BBQ unit outside and could be made into a bread baking oven under cover. Finding parts for some Aga ovens is hard.

For R Banks: The best **PORTABLE SMOKERS** are available at hiking and camping stores and are quite reasonably priced. I notice that a lot of people are asking about tagasaste. I know that in several states this has been listed as a pest. Your local council will advise you if your state is affected by the ban on it. I know it has been listed here in Victoria as a noxious weed.

For Betty Crocker: With regard to your son's problem, I suggest you read a book called *Prescription for Nutritional Healing*, ISBN 0-89529-727-2, publishers Avery Publishing Group. It has all about your son's problem in it. Also, you can buy a glue for repairing porcelain in craft shops. It might leave a slight mark.

For Lilian concerning **ACANTHUS MOLLIS**: unfortunately I cannot find among any of my horticulture books where it recommends eating this plant at all. I know there are 20 different species of this plant and the one you are talking about comes from Italy. I would suggest you ask some people of Italian heritage.

Colin J Law.
Email: colinlaw@yahoo.com

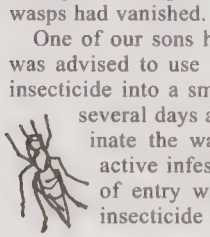
Re the Aga stove, we would also suggest that Allie could try two of our advertisers – Scandia Stoves & BBQs or Castworks.

Dear Megg & Readers,

In GR 156, Abe and Carol have a request for **HELP WITH WASPS**. I have been bitten once, not as bad as a bee sting for me, though I am aware they can be dangerous for many people. My experience, though limited, might be useful.

Several years ago I collected waste from a pie shop, included in the waste were Boston buns. They are very tempting to wasps. I was soon having dozens of wasps visiting at 'feed-up time'. My solution was a container of Ant Rid, the contents being stirred through the icing on several Boston buns. About a week later the wasps had vanished.

One of our sons has wasps in a house wall and he was advised to use a puffer to blow a coating of an insecticide into a small gap in the brickwork. It took several days and applications of insecticide to eliminate the wasps. Three years ago we had a heavy active infestation of wasps in a fibrocement wall. Point of entry was a very small hole; advice was to squirt insecticide into the hole at night, using a torch with a film of red plastic over the light, as this would not disturb the wasps. An adhesive patch over the entry hole completed the job – no more wasps.



I understand some municipal and shire councils will take action where wasps are troublesome; it might be worthwhile approaching your local authority.

Ken Woods,
79 Blake St, SHOREHAM 3916.

Dear GR,

I have been planning to write this letter for a while now, but as I learnt the English language as a semi-literate adult it is not hard to keep postponing it. Even with the help of technology I still find it quite a task for me to compose and to write a reasonable letter.

These days we are more and more, sometimes very painfully, aware of the importance of preserving water, energy and other natural resources of our planet. My letter is about how I do my bit towards that goal. Some ideas I have implemented I might have read in Feedback in years past.

A few years ago somebody was asking about a **WATER PUMP OPERATED BY FOOT** pedals. At the time I had an idea on how to go about building one. Some time later I thought that I'd better try to put the idea to practice and make it myself. And bingo, my idea worked. Now I can sit down, read, have a cuppa, exercise and pump water, all at the same time. Good fun and saves me some money too.

For rainwater collection I make tanks out of rough-sawn timber and line them up with waterproofed tarps. I have most materials and some know-how, my water consumption costs me next to nothing.

To **WASH GREASY, DIRTY HANDS** I make a mixture of sand, firewood ash and a small amount of caustic soda. All that I mix in a 20-litre drum with rainwater. I first scrub my hands in the mud and wash it off in another drum. By the time one drum is empty the other one is full. I add some more sand and so on, and make another mixture. The more times I re-use the mixture the better it seems to become. So, never does any of the mixture go into the ground, and once again I save lots of water and some money too. My hands feel a lot better than when I used to use the industrial hand cleaners and I do not need to use any hand creams any more.

I've altered my old single-flush toilet cistern by placing a large bolt inside the centre shut-off plunger. This way I only use water while I hold my finger on the push button.

The auto wash machine is out and the old wringer is back in. Now I use less water and washing powder as the emphasis is on soaking the dirty clothing rather than just quick washing. These days with all those good washing powders and soaps on the market it is not hard to do a good wash, especially if rainwater is used.

For those tough enough to have cold showers only, improved heart and blood circulation are possible, and no doubt other positive contributions to our health are assured.

To save electricity I have made a few changes and improvements. As well as replacing the auto washer I have repaired the seals on my old fridge doors and, by putting it on a timer (electricity consumption diet), and making few other adjustments in my electricity consumption, now my bills are markedly reduced.

I could go on about other changes I have made, and I am not suggesting that anybody else should do as I did because I have most materials and some know-how. But I would like to conclude by saying that everybody could do their bit to save some of our most important resources, air, environment and, not the least, their own wallets.

Joseph,
WA.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR Readers,

More help needed please. Does anyone know of large patches of **NOVEMBER GRASS**, also known as summer grass, growing between **PORT MACQUARIE**, west to Armidale and north to Maclean? Desperately needed for my finches – no grass, no nests, no young. Please write with a map or ring (reverse charges).

Also, does anyone know of a nontoxic way to kill or deter cockroaches? It's for aviaries where cockroaches start crawling around at night into nests and the finches desert their nests.

One last thing: I'm living in town, so I need a **QUIET ROOSTER** breed. Yes, I know all roosters crow but is there a quieter breed with a softer crow, or one that doesn't crow as often? Any ideas? Thanks everyone.

Greg Nicolls,
10 Bellwood Dve, NAMBUCCA HEADS 2448.
Ph: 02-6568-7242.

Sorry Greg, if a rooster is doing his job he's a noisy character. What about soundproofing part of the chook house?

Dear Grass Roots,

WHEELIE WONDERS – WITHOUT THE WHEELS? With due respect to Graham (Wizard) Watkins of St Helens in Tassie ('A Wheelie Good Compost Bin Mark 2' – GR 150), and Ken Frost of Albion Park Rail NSW ('More Wheelie Wonders – New Development' – GR 157), if something isn't broken why fix it?

The whole point of a wheelie bin is that it is mobile and can be moved around. I find that I have to periodically move my compost-bin-with-no-bottom, which rests on the ground, mainly because tree and shrub roots find their way into it in search of nourishment. I am not keen on worm farms because of mite infestation.

A Canberra firm (www.earthbasics.com.au) makes a range of earth friendly products 'stuff you can throw out without hurting the environment', including Worm Postosta made from a modified wheelie bin, with a tap at the bottom to drain out excessive moisture (worm water). As the worms cannot escape into the ground, it would have to be kept in a cool place – in the sun the heat would cook them.

It is possible to make compost without the help of worms, as indicated by those expensive rotating compost bins which are turned every day and supposedly make compost in 14 days – rather optimistic I think.

I pride myself on my recycling activities, but I don't like mess. It is possible to reduce, reuse, recycle and also a lot safer and more aesthetically pleasing not to have mess and ugly commodities around the place.

Penny Ferguson,
WOONONA.

To the Most Envied People on Earth,

Yes, envied, well at least by myself and my family because you are all living your dream to own a small but happy piece of this big wide country of ours. We are long-time readers but first-time writers.

I have recently been diagnosed with **MULTIPLE CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY**. As some may know, it is not a pleasant thing. You can't really have any normal products that everyday folk have, like scented soap, deodorants, detergents, chemicals. When you think about it, what these days doesn't have some sort of chemical, solvent or other nasty toxic brew in it? Any of these can really make you sick and down, so you must avoid all contact with them if possible. I am writing to ask if any of you been associated with this problem? Any ideas or feedback will be gratefully accepted.

Also, I am hoping for some info on cabins or houses in a rural and clean area in which to live as healthy a life as possible. I would like to hear from folk in almost any area. Debbie and I love the rural life and want to be self-sufficient. We would like to start growing organically to improve my health and just to live a chemical-free, happy life. I know this is more than likely an old topic, but I would welcome any ideas on cleaning products, especially homemade ones, good recipes, anything of interest.

My first most important task is to try and find a house to rent or caretake in a rural area. We are a kind, honest and trustworthy couple, with two good boys who also love the country life. At the moment we are renting in the Hunter Valley region, a lovely area, but living in town. The birds, wildlife, fresh clean air, watching the sun rise and then set, getting your hands dirty in your little garden, watching your plants grow to fruition, dangling your feet in a muddy cold dam – all of this and more is what my family and I were put on this earth to enjoy, and to help folk out, give a hand when needed, come round for a barbie and to enjoy good company and life in general.

We simply wish to feel like we are alive again, to feel free and happy. Maybe with someone's help we could be pointed in the right direction and can share some of your happiness as well. I thank you all so much for any help or letters we may receive. I do guarantee to answer all of them in time to thank you all personally. That is what is missing today, that tiny personal touch, don't you think? Don't hesitate to contact us, even if just for a chat, by phone, letter or email.

Daryl & Debbie Lever & boys,
8 Brunker St, KURRI KURRI 2327.
Ph: 02-4936-2394.
Email: zeuss1@kooee.com.au

Robyn Stewart's books: 'Chemical-free Home', and 'Chemical-free Pest Control' will be helpful for you. Good luck in your search for a clean place to live.

Dear Grass Roots,

While reading through a collection of back issues I noticed a lot of requests for information about **PAWPAW** and its therapeutic qualities. I would like to recommend all books by Harald W Tietze. He has written an extremely comprehensive book about pawpaw and many other books about a vast array of fascinating healing substances including spirulina and kombucha. Incidentally, he is the man responsible for popularising kombucha many years ago.

All readers who believe in being responsible for their own healing please peruse the following title: *Take control of your health and escape the sickness industry*, by Elaine Hollingsworth. This book changed my life more than I could tell you.

Finally, I'd like to warn all readers against the use of artificial sweeteners. These neurotoxic chemicals are considered to be the most dangerous substances ever to infiltrate our food chain and to be consumed en masse in the history of the human race. They have been blamed for illnesses ranging from cancer, to Alzheimer's, MS, chronic fatigue, Parkinson's and suicidal depression, just to name a few. Please avoid any food labels with additive numbers anywhere between (950) and (959). There is an infinite storehouse of information regarding these substances available on the Internet. Good luck and be ever vigilant. May love and wisdom swell from within and affect all you encounter.

Anson Mack,
PO Box 1058, DICKSON 2602.

Oops – Re tongue lettuce seeds, Robert Winterburn's address was wrong in Feedback last issue, it should be 8 Loves Ln, Rosslea, Townsville 4812. Apologies all.

KIDS PAGE

NATIONAL PARKS

National parks are areas of land permanently set aside to protect them now and in the future. They each have their own important physical features, environments and plant and animal life. The first national park in Australia (and the second in the world) was established in 1879 – the Royal National Park south of Sydney. Approximately 3200 national parks, conservation parks, reserves and refuges have since been declared in Australia. This equates to more than 40 million hectares (5.3% of Australia's land mass). If you are planning a trip, it is a good idea to find out about the national parks in areas you'll be visiting.

National Park Word Search

Find the following 26 national parks: Belair, Booti Booti, Freycinet Peninsula, Goobang, Gurig, Idalia, Namagi, Nattai, Noosa, Nullabor, Otway, Precipice, Rokeby, Coolah Tops, Cradle Mountain, Kakadu, Kalbarri, Lake Eyre, Lane Cove, Royal, Tooloom, Dunk Is, Elsey, Errinundra, Cape Leeuwin, Woko.

Note: all names are either vertical or horizontal and letters are sometimes used for more than one name.

Q	W	E	T	T	V	X	M	G	M	P	P	Q	C	E	E	R	R	Y	U	J
B	N	H	U	T	Y	D	D	U	N	M	O	P	R	L	L	D	E	A	Q	W
B	I	A	T	T	A	N	E	R	Y	E	E	K	A	L	N	M	A	S	R	E
N	E	R	D	S	W	O	R	I	A	L	E	B	D	L	I	T	R	E	W	M
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M	K	L	E	R	E	A	S	I	U	Y	R	O	M	Q	N	Y	T	O	P	E
C	A	E	V	O	C	E	N	A	L	H	E	O	O	T	N	P	Z	F	R	E
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S	A	O	J	U	L	A	Y	O	R	G	C	O	I	F	I	A	U	D	U	I
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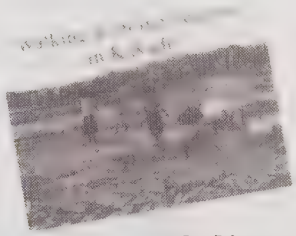
P	R	E	T	N	M	L	K	A	K	L	I	U	P	S	A	R	D	Z	X	N
Y	R	D	C	A	T	H	K	I	P	O	E	F	G	F	B	I	U	W	S	M

Kakadu National Park

Kakadu is Australia's largest national park – 8000 square miles. It is an area of amazing environmental and cultural significance. The Gundjeihmi-speaking indigenous people of the area divide the year into six distinct seasons rather than just the usual four in the rest of Australia. Here are some interesting facts about Kakadu.

★ Lightening occurs more often in Kakadu than any other place in the world – up to 80 times a day.
★ Saltwater crocodiles, called *ginga* in Gundjeihmi, have survived for 200 million years on Earth.
★ Wind-fed mini cyclones called willy-willies occur in Kakadu.
★ Gurrung is the dry, hot season.
★ Gunumeleng is when storms, lightening and winds from the west start up.
★ Gudjeuk is the big wet – monsoon season.
★ Banggerreng is the last part of the wet season and signs of harvest time.
★ Yegge is part of the dry season and the time of many fires and burning.
★ Wurrgeng is part of the dry season, with cool mornings.



BOOK REVIEW
Walking with the Seasons in Kakadu

By Diane Lucas and Ken Searle

This is a beautiful nonfiction picture book. Each of the six seasons of Kakadu according to the Gundjeihmi-speaking people are evoked with descriptions of environmental conditions, plant life, animal life and human activities and corresponding artwork. Both Gundjeihmi and English words are used and the whole book gives a great insight into this unique area.

H/b, Allen & Unwin, RRP $29.95.

Make A Baby Croc – Crikey!

You will need:

- paper – green or brown
- scissors
- glue
- pencils

Copy and cut out the crocodile figure at the top of the page. Fold a piece of paper or thin cardboard in half. Place the long, straight back of the crocodile's body against the fold and trace. Cut the traced croc to make your stand-up creature. Draw eyes and body patterns with pencils.

IN THE KITCHEN

The sun is out at last and the garden flourishing. Spring is the time to enjoy fresh vegies like artichokes, asparagus, beans, broccoli, peas and silverbeet – all the greens. Fruits in season include strawberries, mangos, oranges and pineapples.

BROCCOLI & CHEDDAR SOUP

2 onions, chopped finely
2 sticks celery, diced
2 tbsp butter
2 lt chicken or vegie stock
1 head broccoli, chopped roughly
¼ cup cream
¼ cup parsley
1 cup cheddar cheese, grated

In a large saucepan, sauté the onion and celery in the butter until translucent, about 5 minutes, then add stock and chopped broccoli. Cook broccoli until soft, about 20 minutes. Add cream, parsley and cheese. Stir until cheese has dissolved. Taste and add salt and pepper if necessary. Serves 4.

ASPARAGUS TARTLETS

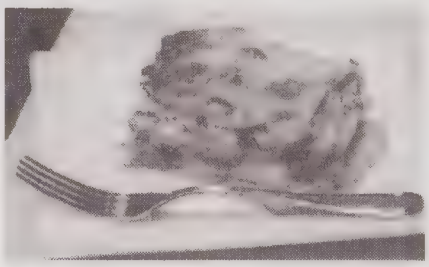
2 sheets flaky pastry
2 leeks
1 tsp butter
2 eggs
100 ml cream
salt and ground black pepper
1 tsp fresh thyme, chopped
½ cup cheese, grated (try Gruyere, Swiss or a mature cheddar)
2 bunches asparagus

Use a glass or cutter to cut 12 rounds from the 2 sheets of pastry, and line two 6-hole muffin tins with them. Bake at 180° C for 10 minutes, then cool. Cut leek into 2 cm slices and sauté in butter till tender. Meanwhile, beat eggs, cream, seasonings and thyme together in a bowl. Cut asparagus into 2 cm pieces. In each tart case, put some leek and some cheese then cover with egg mixture. Top with artful pieces of asparagus. Cook tartlets at 180° C for 15 to 20 minutes.

GLUTEN-FREE VEGIE 'LASAGNE'

1 cup cheddar cheese, grated
250 g ricotta cheese
2 tbsp grain mustard
juice 1 lemon
freshly ground black pepper
2 lge potatoes, thinly sliced
2 lge tomatoes, thinly sliced
500 g pumpkin, peeled and thinly sliced lengthwise
2 parsnips, sliced into 5 cm lengths
2 carrots, sliced into 5 cm lengths
bunch silverbeet leaves, chopped
200 g pine nuts

In a mixing bowl, mix half the cheddar with the ricotta, mustard, lemon and pepper. Take a nonstick baking dish and layer the bottom with half the potato slices. Top with a thin layer of cheese mixture and half the tomato slices. Continue to alternate layers of the remaining vegies with the ricotta mix, finishing with a final layer of tomato and then potato. Sprinkle pine nuts as you go. Top with the last of the ricotta mix and pine nuts and the reserved cheddar. Bake at 200° C for 45 minutes or until vegetables are tender and the top is golden brown. Cut into individual 'stacks' and serve carefully! Serves 4.



THAI SALAD IN LETTUCE CUPS

220 g fine rice noodles
1 bunch asparagus spears
1 cup beans
1 carrot
1 knob ginger, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 tbsp olive oil
4 tbsp light soya sauce
juice 1 lemon
3 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
1 red chilli, chopped finely
½ red capsicum, diced
1 red onion, chopped finely
¼ cup coriander, chopped finely
¼ cup mint leaves, chopped finely
2½ tbsp unsalted peanuts, chopped
1 cup bean sprouts
lettuce leaves suitable to use as cups

Cook rice noodles according to directions on packet and put aside to cool.

Cut asparagus and beans to 2 cm pieces and carrots into fine sticks. Stir-fry all three with ginger and garlic in olive oil for a few minutes to par cook. Whisk soya, lemon juice, sweet chilli and chopped chilli together and pour over noodles. Add warmed vegies, capsicum, onion, herbs and peanuts and stir through carefully. Peel 4 lettuce leaves from lettuce and shape into cups on separate plates. Fill with noodle mix and top with sprouts. Eat with fingers. Serves 4.

REAL STRAWBERRY TOPPING

⅔ cup sugar
⅓ cup water
500 g strawberries, washed, hulled
1 tbsp lemon juice
5 mint leaves, torn

Place sugar and water in a saucepan, stir and bring to the boil. Simmer until sugar is dissolved. Allow syrup to cool completely (try putting pan in a bowl of ice water). Place half the berries in the blender and add lemon juice, mint and cooled syrup. Purée until smooth. Coarsely chop remaining strawberries and add to purée. Use on crêpes, ice cream, yoghurt etc.

SPRING STRAWBERRY WINE

250 g strawberries
10 lemon balm leaves
2 tbsp rosemary leaves
1 bottle white wine

Wash, hull and slice berries. Finely chop herbs. Mix berries, herbs and wine in a clean glass container. Seal and shake. Refrigerate for 2 days, shaking occasionally. Strain through a sieve lined with cloth. Serve chilled and drink in a hammock dozing in the sunshine.

Surviving Snack Attacks

by Lin Foley, Mylneford, NSW.

'Mum, what is there to eat?' is the standard greeting I get from my children after they return from school. They throw their bags into a corner and walk straight to the fridge. I know from experience I'd better leave them to it. They need refuelling before a genial conversation is possible. Kids seem to be hungry all the time!

Since we live out of town we experience times of feast and famine. For the first few days after shopping there is plenty of tasty and convenient food to find. After all that has disappeared, though, the cupboard and fridge are starting to look bleak. Because we have no shop nearby for an emergency dash, over the years I have learnt to buy the kids snack attack survival food items that they enjoy and that are also healthy and filling.

BROWN RICE

I like to keep a bowl of cooked brown rice in the fridge. The kids take out as much as they like and reheat it with low-fat milk. The addition of a tablespoon of honey makes for a filling snack.

Rice contains carbohydrates that are easy to digest and will restore their energy levels. Another benefit of brown rice is that it contains plenty of B vitamins, which are important for healthy nervous, digestive and immune systems. A lack of this vitamin may result in depression, anxiety, premenstrual problems, skin disorders and hyperactivity.

OATS

We often eat rolled oats for breakfast, either as porridge in the winter or as muesli in the summer. The kids, however, like to snack on the muesli any time they experience a hunger attack. To make muesli I simply add dried fruit (especially sultanas and dates), seeds (such as sunflower and pumpkin) and nuts (macadamia, almond, pecan etc) to the rolled oats. You can buy a bag of dried fruit and nuts from the supermarket in the same section you buy the oats. The kids eat the muesli with low-fat milk, or sometimes with warm water.

Lin's kids enjoy delicious healthy snacks.

Oats are high in fibre and carbohydrates and very useful to include in the diet of kids who are concerned with their weight. Oats are very filling and take a long time to digest. In other words, it will keep the kids out of the pantry for a while. Oats release sugar slowly into the bloodstream, resulting in even blood sugar levels and, therefore, even tempers. Oats also are a good source of iron. To increase the iron absorption it is useful to eat oats with something that contains vitamin C, such as a glass of orange juice. Oats are often prescribed to treat a wide variety of nervous conditions, including depression, anxiety and insomnia. I find that a bowl of porridge or muesli for breakfast helps calm exam nerves.

APRICOTS

Although more a luxury than an everyday treat, I like to have some apricots in the pantry for those can't-stop, got-to-go, snack situations.

Apricots are great in satisfying sweet cravings. They are high in fibre, relatively low in calories, and release sugar slowly into the bloodstream. Apricots are also a good source of iron. This is very useful for girls, especially if they are not keen on eating red meat.

FIGS

We are lucky to have some fig trees in our orchard and I can't wait till they'll produce those delicious fruits that our whole family likes to eat.

Figs are mildly laxative and are great to relieve constipation in a gentle way. Both dried and fresh figs also contain iron. Figs are a good source of calcium, needed for strong bones and teeth. A good intake of calcium during the first 20 years helps reduce the chances of developing osteoporosis in later life.

BAKED BEANS

Good old baked beans are cheap to buy and easy to store. They are haricot beans that have been cooked and combined with a tomato sauce. Baked beans contain more calcium than other legumes, are high in soluble fibre and a good source of iron.

Of course, it is important to experiment and find out what the children like. After all, there is no point in filling up your pantry with food they won't eat. Make it easy for them to prepare the food, and then just sit back.

Resource

DK Complete Guide to Healing Foods, Amanda Ursell, 2000.

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FOOD FIT FOR KIDS

by Mary Horsfall, Euroa, Vic.

It has always been a priority amongst *Grass Roots* parents to ensure their children have a healthy diet and an active outdoor lifestyle. These values can be increasingly difficult to maintain in the face of massive advertising of unhealthy food choices, peer pressure and an ever more passive-entertainment-oriented society.

According to a recent news report, 46 percent of Australian adults are classified as overweight or obese. Every other week, it seems, there are new statistics telling us that obesity levels are on the rise in all age groups. A recent study of 98,000 preschoolers in South Australia found that 19 percent of the boys and 22 percent of the girls were already classified as overweight or obese, well on the way to joining the 46 percent of adults so classified. These statistics are particularly alarming when we are aware that obesity is linked with numerous health and social problems.

Don't despair! Along with the trash, even in response to it, there are some treasures emerging. Some highly motivated and resourceful individuals are making it their business to improve children's nutrition. Two people who are attacking the problem from completely different angles are Janine Allis and Joe Harazim.

Melbourne-based Janine Allis, a working mother of three young boys, was concerned about the amount of fast food her children were eating, partly as a result of her own busy lifestyle that left little time or energy for preparing nutritious food – a quandary familiar to many working parents. Determined that fast food didn't necessarily have to be unhealthy food, Janine experimented at home, using her sons and husband as product testers, until she had developed an appetising range of healthy juices.

She opened her first Boost Juice store in Adelaide in early 2000. Three years later saw the opening of the 50th store, in Miranda, NSW. Boost Juice stores (and many other juice bars as well) can be found in every capital city and in many shopping centres. Some are franchises and some company owned. The bright colours and modern layouts appeal especially to young people, but make the stores happy places to visit for all age groups. As well as juices, the stores offer smoothies, muffins and frozen yoghurt and every product sold is low fat. Nutritional supplements for specific needs can also be added to drinks.

While Janine Allis has been making a business out of creating an appealing, healthy, fast-food chain, Queenslander Joe Harazim has recognised the same problem and developed his own, quite different, approach to it. Joe has travelled extensively around the world. In his travels he met many people and became aware of diet-related health problems. He knows the power of childhood impressions and realises the need to use positive images that will stay with children for life.

He is aiming to educate young children about the benefits of healthy food, and give fresh fruit and vegies a 'cool' image through a colouring book and a storybook he has created in association with a cartoonist. Both feature cheerful cartoon characters and a simple story to encourage children to turn away from junk food and learn that healthy food is fun. At this stage the colouring book is available and the storybook is awaiting publication.

Joe also has plans to release a music CD and a video with the same theme and eventually to export the concept to other countries. The response so far to his ambitious project has been positive, but he is in need of support to publicise the concept more widely and to find a publisher for the storybook.

It is not only committed individuals who are taking positive steps to encourage children to eat healthily. The Department of Education and Training Victoria has recently released a set of guidelines for school canteens and other school food services. The guidelines emphasise the responsibility schools have to move towards providing more healthy food choices and to educate students about health. There is an explicit recognition that 'sound nutrition is closely linked to optimum educational outcomes'.

The National Obesity Taskforce consists of senior health representatives from Commonwealth and State governments as well as relevant industry and community stakeholders. It has been charged with the task of developing a national action plan for tackling overweight and obesity. While the Taskforce is not specifically targeting children, any resultant improvements in adults' eating habits is bound also to impact on the young. A final report identifying roles and responsibilities for a range of initiatives will be presented to health ministers by 30 November this year, so watch newspapers for developments after this date.

In another encouraging trend, global food manufacturer Kraft is about to reduce sugar and fat in some of its foods. The company plans to establish a panel of health experts to advise it on the nutrient levels in its products and to develop healthy alternatives. There is speculation that other food manufacturers will follow Kraft's lead. While fresh, unprocessed food is the healthiest choice, it's heartening to know, when we do choose a convenience food, that some manufacturers are endeavouring to improve nutrition standards.

More Information

Anyone interested in Joe Harazim's project can phone 07-4697-6647.

To locate your nearest Boost Juice store phone Hayley Barkla on 03-9809-9806.

All schools in Victoria should have received a copy of the canteen guidelines. Interested parents can find out more from their local school.

The Versatile Silkie

Pet, Egg Layer, Table Bird and Great Broody

by Sharon Greenaway, Strathfieldsaye, Vic.

What's the best way to carry around four or five chooks when you want to move them? In a wheelbarrow of course. Now, if you think that sounds like an efficient way of moving poultry, but believe your chooks would baulk at the idea of sitting quietly in a barrow while your children cart them around the place, then perhaps you should give Silkies a go.

Our children love their Silkies and want to play with them away from the chook shed, which is separate from our fenced-off vegie patch. While we do have an aviary in that area and I'd love to put some Silkies in it, I have to respect the fact that the children's budgie and cockatiels had first claim. So the next best thing for me is to suggest that the children play with their chooks in the vegie garden, and at the same time get a little weeding done. Hence the wheelbarrow rides.

Where to today? Silkies are placid natured and Sharon's are perfectly content to wait in the wheelbarrow to be moved to a suitable location for free ranging.

ABOUT THE BREED

These gentle, 'hairy' fowl have been around for years, and were first recorded by Westerners when explorer Marco Polo sailed the world and saw them in China. Noted for their tendency to go broody regularly, and thus being invaluable to poultry breeders before artificial incubation was easy to obtain, Silkies are still used by fanciers who want an easy and natural way of raising chickens. The broody Silkie hen will adopt any sort of chick or duckling (six to eight eggs at a time is ideal) that hatches out from under her. Just make sure, if you plan to use her for waterfowl, that the water available to her brood is shallow, or she could drown when following her babies.

As a breed that goes broody regularly, Silkies are not prolific layers, although if you keep around six hens you should get enough eggs to keep you going. The eggs are smaller than normal hens' eggs, but larger than those of bantams. In cake recipes I usually allow one and a half to two Silkie eggs for each egg specified in the recipe.

The black-skinned Silkie is a delicacy in Asian food, both as a table bird and used in soup. I have to admit to never having eaten any of our birds, but their eggs are delicious. I have even come across an advertisement on the Internet for pickled Silkie eggs in Japan.

Size and Colour

You might have heard Silkies being referred to as bantams. In Australia you can get the standard bird (simply called a Silkie), around one and a half to two kilograms in weight, or the smaller Silkie bantam bird, which is around a third the size.

Silkies can be found in many colours, all of which are very pretty. If you or your children get some Silkies and are thinking of showing them at an agricultural or poultry show, you would

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need to read up on exactly what colours are accepted for showing. Your local library should have a copy of the *Australian Poultry Standards* for you to refer to. I suggest starting off with either a black or white line of birds if you are thinking of breeding for the show.

You can get a bearded variety of Silkie too, which has a muff around its neck. Any Silkie you buy should have blue (preferred) or mulberry ear lobes, mulberry coloured pea comb, five toes on each foot with feathering on the legs and outside and middle toes, and black skin. The feathering on top of the female looks like a powder puff, while the rooster's feathers stream backwards.

Kathleen and Robert enjoy taking their pet Silkies for a ride in the wheelbarrow.

CARE AND FEEDING

We feed regular layer pellets, shell grit, wheat and occasionally vegie scraps to our birds. Naturally, plenty of fresh water is essential at all times.

As with all poultry, Silkies are vulnerable to attack from dogs, foxes and the like. I have even heard of a Silkie being carted off by a bird of prey! Good housing for both day and night-time is essential. Allow an area of around two to three square metres for every two birds. Silkies like to perch at night; position perches 30 centimetres off the ground.

Our Silkies live in prefabricated metal sheds with concrete floors. We let them out during the day when one of us will be home, but keep them locked up if we are going to be out. We have an occasional problem with stray dogs in the area, so don't want to take any chances. Fencing for Silkies only needs to be around half a metre high because they can't fly over the top of it.

Like all fowl, Silkies will be prone to attack from mites and other annoying pests, so do check them often. Also, scaly leg is a problem with most feather-legged birds. We use no-name cooking oil spray as a preventative. Spray onto the birds' legs weekly to smother any hiding mites.

Worm your birds regularly. We give them garlic at the full moon. We roughly crush garlic cloves and put them into the waterers for three days at that time.

You could need to trim their toenails if your birds are running on soft ground. We use human toenail clippers and trim only a little bit at a time so as not to cut the blood vessel in the nail. If you nick the vessel, paint some Stockholm tar onto the area and separate your bird until it stops bleeding.

Some Silkies will get dirty feathers around their vents (bottoms). Either trim the area or give it a wash with warm soapy water.

BUYING A SILKIE.

I would not buy a Silkie until it is starting to lay. Chooks can suddenly drop dead for lots of reasons. Silkies can be expensive and you don't want to spend money on a chicken that might die before you have a single egg from her. With some lines of Silkie it is very difficult to sex the birds. For instance, last summer I sold a four- to five-month-old pullet to someone, as well as giving her a free cockerel and selling an older hen. A couple of months later the person to whom I sold the bird reported to me that the 'pullet' was crowing! I would have sworn on a stack of bibles that it was a female. If you want a nice type and colour of Silkie for showing, it is difficult to tell whether the bird will be any good until it reaches maturity.

Further Reading

Website: www.geocities.com/Petsburgh/Park/3826/index.html

The Silkie, Not Your Average Pet, Sharon Greenaway, published by Bellsouth, 8/5-7 Vesper Drv, Narre Warren 3805. Ph: 03-9796-7044. Email: poultry@bellsouth.com.au

Australian Poultry Standards: ask at your local library or contact: APSP, 480 Macclesfield Rd, Macclesfield 3782.

The Silkie Fowl, Joseph Batty, Beech Publishing House, Station Yard, Elsted, Midhurst, West Sussex.

Silkie fowl fact sheet, The Silkie Club of Australia, Secretary, Sue Scott, 6 Colville Rd, Yellow Rock 2777.

Australasian Poultry Magazine, back copies or subscriptions available from: Poultry Information Publishers, PO Box 438, Seymour 3661.

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Growing Ginger In Sydney

by Nevin Sweeney, St Clair, NSW.

We like to cook Asian food and in the process use quite a lot of ginger so, in the spirit of self-sufficiency, I wanted to grow some. I had tried on a number of occasions previously, both in containers and in the ground (in the chook pen – very fertile), but the results tended to always be the same: one nice green shoot was produced and then the plant promptly died. In a fit of pique I decided to follow the old adage – 'if all else fails, read the instructions' – and look it up in my gardening books.

Ginger is a tropical plant and my initial fears were that I could not provide the correct environment for it to grow in, however, after some study I found that the most likely cause of my problems was a lack of drainage. According to the books, ginger does best in a well-drained sandy soil with lots of organic matter (it is a 'heavy feeder'). My problem had been the good old Sydney clay.

I decided to plant some in my vegie patch where there was some clear space near the cucumbers I had growing. Fresh ginger rhizomes start to send out white spikes in summer if not used quickly, so I broke off four pieces, about thumb size, which had at least one shoot each, from our current stock of supermarket-bought ginger. I planted these into the cucumber bed about 25 millimetres down and about half a metre away from each other. I planted them in November, but in September the bed had been deeply dug and a considerable amount of horse, chook and cow poo added. A newspaper and lucerne hay mulch was then laid down on top of the bed. At the stage when the ginger was planted the cucumbers were yielding well and planting the ginger had no effect on that.

The ginger initially sent up one green shoot for each plant. These were from 50 to 25 centimetres high. As the summer progressed more shoots were sent up, to the point where the rhizomes appeared to be about 20 to 25 centimetres long. The books specify regular feeding, but the initial preparation must have been enough because apart from regular watering every three days or so no other management was required. Certainly, none of the other pests and diseases that regularly assail my vegies showed the slightest interest in the ginger.

Above: Cauliflower and ginger growing side by side in the garden.

Fresh ginger rhizomes.

Again, the books state that ginger should be harvested in late summer for

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Daughter Angela holding a ginger plant.

fresh use or left until the leaves die off in late autumn if harvested for drying. I left my harvest until the leaves were dying off and found that the ginger was still okay for fresh use. The harvest was four large unblemished rhizomes. The one I used immediately had excellent flavour. I passed one of the roots over to the friend who had suggested I try giving ginger another go, and took one inside for immediate use. This left me with about a kilo or more of fresh ginger to store somehow. I left the two roots outside in the shade for a week to harden off the skin a bit (that was the theory anyway) and then had to work out how to preserve them.

I wanted to use them as fresh ginger, as opposed to dried, pickled, candied or otherwise preserved ginger. To do this I put some moist, coarse river sand into an insulated container (broccoli box) and put the box in the garage. This successfully kept the ginger in good condition throughout the winter. By late spring the remaining ginger had some serious sprouts and was a little dried out in parts, although the flavour was still quite good. I was able to remove some sprouted lumps for planting in this year's vegie patch – they are also growing well as I write. Maybe this year I will try drying or otherwise preserving some of my harvest by a different method to see how it goes.

I suppose the moral of the story is to be prepared to give growing anything a go and, when all else fails, read the instructions!

Useful References

Asian Herbs and Vegetables, Penny Woodward, Hyland House, Aust, 2000.

Grow Your Own Chinese Vegetables, Geri Harrington, Garden Way, USA, 1984.

Hong Kong Food Plant, SY Zee & LH Hui, Hong Kong Urban Council, Hong Kong, 1981.

Backyard Self Sufficiency, Jackie French, Aird Books, Aust, 1992.

The Edible Asian Garden, Rosalind Creasy, Periplus Editions, USA, 2000.

The Good Life in the '90s, Mary Moody, Simon and Schuster, Aust, 1995.

SIMPLE GINGER STORAGE

A simple way to store and use ginger is to cut the root into manageable sections, wash it well, dry on paper towel and freeze. To use, grate the required amount from the frozen root and return unused portion to the freezer.

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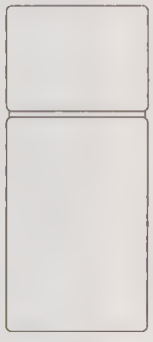

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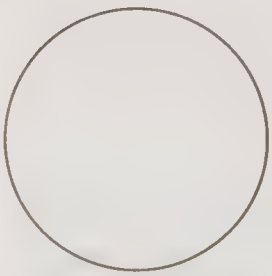
SAVE ENERGY
Put A Lid On It

by Ray Taylor, Darwin, NT.

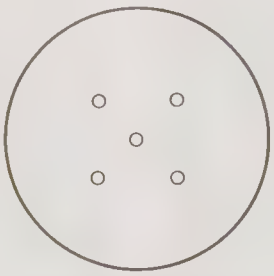
In a well-conducted test the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand found that water heated in containers with lids boiled 18 percent faster than that in the control unlidded containers. In mountain huts, this would translate to: less fuel, less weight to carry and less cost, so more dough for other matters.

Our home utensils are mostly lidless, so I thought money could be saved on fuel, whether electricity or gas, if I made lids for them. A Chinese flat frying pan lid found in the cupboard became a model.

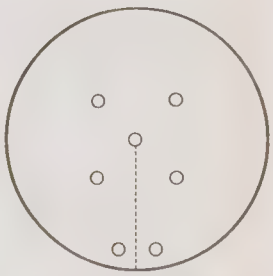
Empty four-litre olive oil tins gave me sheet metal of the right gauge that was easy to cut with tin snips.



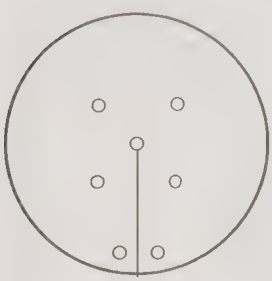
Cut a circle out of the sheet metal (here, 4-litre olive oil tin), the size of the lid you want.



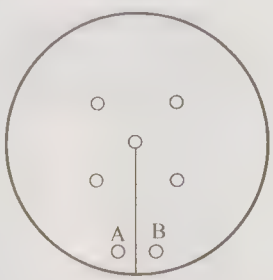
Drill a hole in the disc centre of about 5 millimetres. Drill four 5-millimetre holes for steam escape.



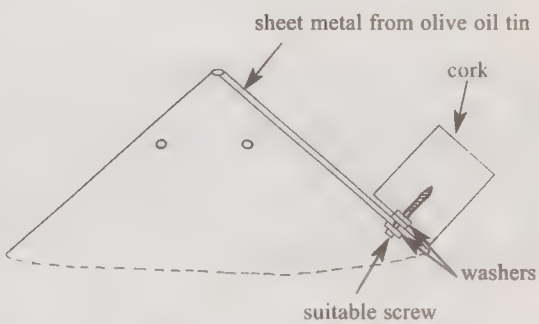
Mark only one radius on this sheet metal disc. Drill two holes, each about 20 millimetres from your drawn radius, to be lid handle holes.



Cut up your radius line neatly, amidships of the two circumference holes.



In your useful junk box, locate a suitable screw, two washers and cork. Carefully align holes A and B, fit washers and predrilled cork, don't over-tighten.



Adapt the size to suit your needs. There is scope for variation in handle type and number of vent holes.

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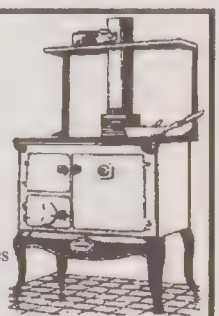

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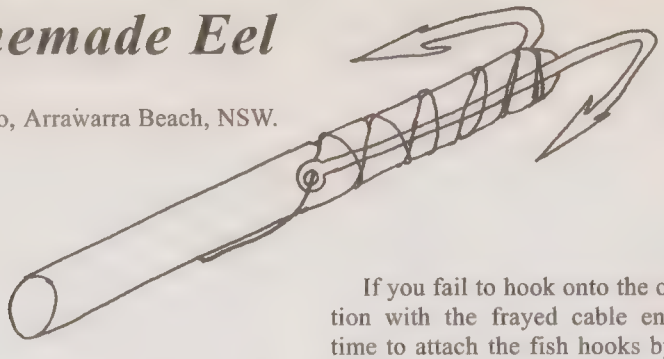
RECYCLING RUNS RIOT

Homemade Eel

by Roberino, Arrawarra Beach, NSW.



A blocked drain can cause quite an upheaval in a household and plumbers aren't always five minutes away. Provided the blockage is not too serious, a method available using bits and pieces in the shed can be tried. You will need an electric drill with a reverse drive, a length of steel cable one centimetre in diameter and two stout fish hooks. The cable will only negotiate 90-degree bends (maximum) so finding an access plug in the line is essential. You can make a hole, provided you are confident you can make it good afterwards.

Probe the cable down until you get a resistance so you know approximately where the blockage is. Try prodding, just in case it's possible to dislodge the blockage. If that doesn't work, cut the cable 50 centimetres more than the access plug or hole. Fray the end that will grapple the blockage and re-insert the cable, turning it while feeding it down to the obstruction. Connect the drill and gently turn the cable opposite to the winding of the cable and you will notice if there is a resistance, at which stage begin pulling while turning the cable.

If you fail to hook onto the obstruction with the frayed cable ends, it's time to attach the fish hooks by using the cable wire to tie on securely through the eyes of the hooks.

Patience is, of course, essential and if the frustration is getting a bit much a break for a cuppa or a beer is the best strategy.

About now you are probably thinking about some gelignite. *Don't!* If all this fails an 'eel' is available for about $25 from a hardware shop. If that fails, well, I guess it's time to bring in the big guns, at a big price.

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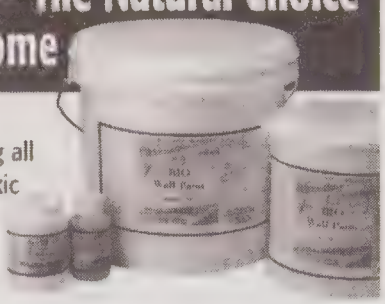

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BUSHFIRES
Don't Blame Trees

by J M Brass, Karalee, Qld.

I find it amazing that few people seem to consider the best defence against fires is not to light them! Even in the dry tropics it has been estimated that 90 percent of fires are deliberately lit, most of them so-called controlled burns. This leaves 10 percent that are accidentally lit (cigarette butts, sparks from engines, campfires) and naturally occurring (lightening). It is estimated from pre-Aboriginal fossil records that in the remainder of Australia fires occurred less than once every 100 years. If the latter 10 percent of fires were extinguished as soon as they were noticed, instead of just when they threaten human property, there would be a reduction in greenhouse gas, airborne particulate matter and other pollutants. There would also be a reduction in the incidence of asthma and other respiratory diseases.

FREQUENCY OF BURNING

When Aboriginal people arrived with their 'firestick culture' the incidence of fires increased in some areas to every 10 years. Aborigines lit small fires in the wet season to drive game towards rivers or cliffs so they could be easily captured. The area burnt in each fire was only a few hectares. This resulted in a vegetation mosaic made up of recently burnt areas, regenerating habitat and old-growth forest. Animals not captured could easily escape to unburnt areas. Plenty of food and shelter were available for a variety of animals in the regenerating and old-growth habitats.

With the increase in frequency of fires, the vegetation changed from predominantly closed forest to open forest, woodland and heath. The climate became drier and the vegetation evolved strategies to regenerate or recolonise after fire. This has led to the perception that all Australian ecosystems require frequent fires before they can regenerate. This is not true for most habitats, with the exception of some types of heath and grassland, which require small patch burns every seven to ten years.

OPEN VERSUS CLOSED

Closed forest, including rainforest and wet sclerophyll forest, is destroyed by fire. The plant species from these habitats have no capacity to regenerate after fire, which also destroys the seeds. Fire does not spread easily in moist habitats, therefore Aboriginal fires rarely penetrated rainforest. This, together with the fact that Aborigines did not clear land for agriculture, means that Australia has the oldest rainforest on earth.

Most open forests require small patch burns every 50 to 100 years to prevent closed forest species from predominating. Cypress pine forests are an exception, with both the trees and their seeds being destroyed by fire. Ironically, current management practices of cypress pine forests include burning the surrounding area every two to three years. This often leads to the death of trees on the edge of the forest and prevents colonisation of adjoining areas.

SIZE OF FIRES

It must be emphasised that all regeneration fires must be small. They should be less than 50 hectares, or less than 10 percent of the habitat type for small areas. This strategy produces the greatest diversity of plant age groups and gives animal and plant species the best chance of long-term survival.

Large fires are generally more intense than small fires. Shallow burrows cannot protect animals from such fires. Plants and seeds usually considered fire tolerant can also be destroyed. Sources of seed of plants that recolonise after fires are also destroyed. The heat of such fires can even kill animals and plants some distance from the fire front.

GERMINATION BY SMOKE

Regeneration fires also need to be lit during the rainy season. Germination of fire-dependent seeds is not triggered by heat, as previously thought, but by chemicals in smoke. These chemicals are only effective as germination stimulants if they are dissolved. This means that to ensure germination rain must fall soon after the fire. Smoke concentrations more than 500 metres from a fire can be high enough to trigger germination. If there are any spaces in the surrounding vegetation, germination of dormant seeds will be triggered by the combination of smoke and rain.

Fires affect ecosystems in other ways. The organic matter content of the soil is reduced. Frequent burning results in decreased soil fertility. Soil structure is also changed by fire. Moisture content is reduced. Clay soils bake hard and sandy soils often become water repellent. Each tonne of vegetation burnt produces about 300 kilograms of ash. Ash is alkaline so it increases soil pH. Most Australian plants are adapted to acid soils (a low pH).

FIRES NO PROTECTION

Another reason frequently given for burning large areas of bushland is to protect homes. In southern and eastern Australia the majority of fires that destroy homes and cause human fatali-

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ties are so-called controlled burns that have got out of control. The rationale behind such burn-offs is to reduce fuel load. Several studies have shown that in many cases fuel load is actually higher one to two weeks after a fire than before. Singed leaves and twigs fall to the ground and are usually more combustible than the combination of living vegetation and decomposing leaf litter that covered the ground before the fire. Logs can smoulder for weeks after a fire. They can re-ignite the dry leaves, which support the fire until it is once again racing through the tree tops.

A better defence against the occasional uncontrolled fires that would occur naturally or by accident is good house design. Steel-framed, light brick, metal-roofed homes are considered the safest. Flat roofs with sprinkler systems offer further protection. Gutters should be covered with metal screens to exclude leaves. Windows should also be covered by metal screens to exclude burning embers. It is often suggested that the area around the home should be cleared of all vegetation. It has been shown that the cleared area would have to be at least 500 metres in diameter to prevent burning materials from igniting the house. A better defence is moist leafy vegetation. The moist leaves, even if there is no visible surface water, put out the embers that fall. A metal sprinkler system will enhance the effect. Choose species from rainforest and wet forests to plant close to houses. Avoid heath and woodland species as they are highly combustible.

POLLUTION AWARENESS

In addition to ecological effects, fires pollute. Even quite remote locations in Australia fail to meet the World Health Organization's recommendations for air quality. This is mainly due to smoke. One kilogram of wood burnt in a wood heater that complies with Australian standards produces five grams of airborne particulate matter if operated under the best possible conditions. This is in addition to the 300 grams of ash that remains in the firebox. More than one kilogram of carbon dioxide is produced because carbon from the wood combines with oxygen from the air. Carbon monoxide, methane and a range of toxic volatile organic substances are also released into the atmosphere. Each year 6.1 million tonnes of wood is harvested from native forest to fuel wood heaters. This compares with 6.4 million tonnes which are converted to wood chips. It is estimated that this only accounts for half of the wood consumed by such devices. This means that fireplaces produce over 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, 50,000 tonnes of airborne particulate matter and significant amounts of other pollutants. Burning off would produce much greater quantities of pollutants because of the quantities of material burnt and the uncontrolled nature of combustion.

Smoke also causes damage to health. Inhaling wood smoke has exactly the same effect as smoking cigarettes. This is supported by the fact that the incidence of asthma and other respiratory diseases has risen in urban areas where wood heaters have become popular.

Large-scale fires can also affect local weather patterns. Updrafts, produced by very hot air rising, often increase wind speed and can change its direction. This is why firefighters and residents are often trapped by sudden unpredicted wind changes. These winds may also cause promising clouds to rise and blow away. It has recently been found that a large amount of smoke in the atmosphere will reduce the probability of rain. This is due to the fact that large numbers of condensation nuclei prevent the formation of water droplets that are heavy enough to fall as rain. Microscopic droplets remain suspended or fall as misty showers. Reduction in leaf area, and hence transpiration rate, reduces the amount of water vapour entering the atmosphere and further reduces the probability of significant rainfall.

TOTAL FIRE BAN

In conclusion, there seem to be few benefits and a great deal of harm caused by lighting fires for purposes of controlled burning. A permanent ban on fires, except for small vegetation regeneration burns, would save human lives and property and reduce pollution, greenhouse gases and damage to the Australian ecosystem.

I hope this article will help to change public opinion from blaming trees for fires to placing the blame where it belongs . . . with the people who light them.

Sources

The information contained in this article has been extracted from various articles in *Grass Roots*, *Renew*, Australian native plant society publications, permaculture books and journals, the Internet, ABC TV programs and various other sources.

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The Case For Hazard Reduction Burning

by David Crawford, Mangrove Mountain, NSW.

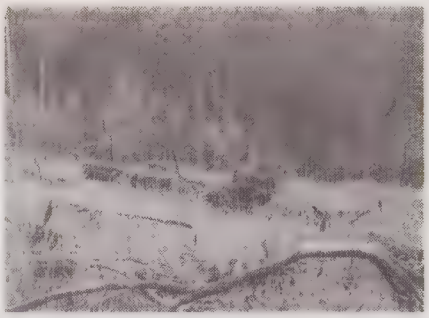
Since the disastrous bushfires of 1994 most people are reluctant to do any burning off for fear of litigation. This is as a result of the knee-jerk reaction of a range of regulatory bodies encouraged by pressure from some environmental groups. I think that these law-making authorities and the powerful environmental lobby may, even with the best of intentions, have got it all wrong. Recent readings have reconvinced me that regular burning off, which I and many other practical property owners have carried out all of our lives, was and is the correct method of bush and native pasture management.

The publication *The Australian Landscape, Observations of Explorers and Early Settlers*, prepared by the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Trust and sponsored by the NSW Farmers' Association, should be read by all. It shows that the regular hazard reduction burns that used to occur were both beneficial and environmentally friendly, not destructive, as we have been indoctrinated to believe.

The publication tells us that nearly every early navigator or explorer mentions fire or comments on the amount of smoke seen, and that the letters, diaries and journals all indicate that Aborigines always carried a lighted firestick and never put a fire out. This means that Aborigines did not just burn occasionally in specific seasons, or for specific reasons. They burnt all the time. Many thousands of fires were, apparently, lit across the countryside on a daily basis. In addition, there was nothing to stop these fires from spreading when conditions were suitable.

Apparently, for most, if not all, Aboriginal tribes, every part of grassland, savanna and eucalypt woodland of their territory would be burnt regularly, annually, or at least every three or four years. They saw it as doing their duty by their land.

Early writings indicate that much of



the tall mixed eucalypt forest with a developed understorey that we know today did not exist at the time of European settlement. Dense forests did not cover large areas of Australia and the first settlers did not need to ringbark large areas because most of the country was woodland, grassland, savanna or open forest. Grazing was plentiful and many areas could be readily ploughed.

This is a comment by Captain Cook about Botany Bay on 1 May 1770:

'After this we made an excursion into the country, which we found diversified with woods, lawns and marshes; the woods are free from underwood of every kind and the trees at such a distance from one another that the whole country, or at least part of it, might be cultivated without being obliged to cut down a single tree.'

Mitchell in 1848 gives the first reference to the regeneration that occurred over much of the country during the latter part of the 1800s:

'The omission of the annual periodical burning by natives, of the grass and young saplings, has already produced in the open forest lands nearest to Sydney, thick forests of young trees, where formerly a man might gallop without impediment and see whole miles before him. Kangaroos are no longer to be seen there; the grass is choked by underwood; neither are there natives to burn the grass, nor is fire longer desirable there amongst the fences of the settler.'

Historian Tim Flannery comments that today's plant communities are very different from those seen in the same locations by Banks and other explorers because of extensive use of fire by Aborigines. He also comments that these changes are not widely recognised today, even by biologists, and that the change in vegetation has important implications for today's land managers.

Historian Josephine Flood remarks on the irony of the parklands and open woodlands that were admired by the early settlers having been created by the Aborigines they regarded as ignorant nomads. She also states that when the Aborigines were driven off their land and the regular, light burning ceased, the old grass turned sour, scrub invaded the parkland, and the settlers' fine houses, fences and sheep became the victims of occasional uncontrollable bushfires.

Many more mentions are made in this publication on the parklands and grasslands of early Australia and the changes that quickly came within 10 to 50 years after regular burn-offs ceased.

Let us rethink our burning-off policies and do preparation before it is too late. I contend that active hazard reduction should be put back high on the agenda of all authorities for the good of the bushland as well as humanity's safety. Even those who live in suburbia should have a great interest in keeping the bushland reduced of fuels for their own safety, as the recent fires in Canberra have demonstrated. As the litter builds up the potential becomes greater to wipe out whole suburban areas. If the Aborigines used fire for thousands of years, without much evident loss of animal or plant species, then why should we come along and alter the burning regime, doing so much damage in such a short time? A checkerboard pattern of burns is needed to be maintained vigilantly to preserve Australia as it used to be. Would everyone please give this some consideration before it is too late.

WHAT'S ON IN SPRING

LA PRIMAVERA

Spring has arrived! Celebrate the season at Lavendula Lavender Farm, where the La Primavera festa will feature advice, demonstrations, delicious regional Ticinese food and cold climate wines. You can discover how to plant a vegie garden, keep heritage hens happy, care for olive trees, make herb vinegars and much more. Sunday 26 October, at Lavendula, 10 minutes north of Hepburn Springs, Vic, ph: 03-5476-4393. Gate fee $3.

NATIONAL RECYCLING WEEK

When you recycle one steel food can, a milk carton or a single newspaper you may not think you're doing much for the environment. However, you need to remember that millions of other people are doing the same, and together, as consumers and householders, we can all make a big difference by recycling. Planet Ark wants everyone to get the habit of recycling during National Recycling Week, 10 to 16 November, For details on how to get involved visit www.plantark.org/nrw/

BIODYNAMIC COURSE

If you missed the last one, Hunter Valley Biodynamic Group is holding its successful introductory BD course again on 25 and 26 October. The weekend includes visits to working BD farms, lectures on the basis of BD methods, soil analysis, vegie production, free range poultry and animal care and a Saturday evening BBQ so that attendees can meet local members. Location is Crawford Court Rooms, Tocal, NSW. Enquiries ph: 02-4938-5308.

ECO-HOME TOUR

If you are in the Hunter and can't make it to the BD course, why not join the Callicima Hill Eco-home Tour on Sunday 26 October. This is a one-day guided tour of enviromentally responsible eco homes. You'll get to see solar electricity, mudbrick, energy efficient holistic design and even artificial wetlands. Cost is $10 for adults, kids free. BYO lunch and drinks. Bookings are essential; call Martin or Jan on 02-6571-1208.

WOMEN ONLY SPACE

Women are invited to the Strengthening Women's Space Festival at Baxter Primary School, Baxter, Vic, on 25 October. The day will feature a variety of speakers, workshops and entertainment aimed towards celebrating women's creativity and self-exploration. Entry is $5, children under 15 free. All proceeds go towards supporting women and children affected by family violence. For more information contact Jill on 03-5971-3554.

TASTY COUNTRY FARE

Feel like a slice of passionfruit sponge? Visit the country fair at Mangrove Mountain, west of Gosford, NSW, to enjoy continuous entertainment, stalls and displays and a hall full of prize-winning exhibits from cakes to needlework. All proceeds are distributed among local community groups. Take the Peats Ridge Exit from the F3 Freeway to the Mangrove Mountain Hall on 25 October or call 02-4376-1139 for details.

CERES KINGFISHER FESTIVAL

The CERES Return of the Kingfisher Festival is an annual multi-arts community celebration welcoming the sacred kingfisher back to its revegetated habitat at CERES and along the banks of the Merri Creek in Melbourne. Sacred kingfishers fled the area due to pollution and habitat destruction, but a creek clean-up and planting in recent years has led to the birds' return. The sacred kingfisher has become a local symbol of the fragility, resilience and harmony of the natural world, and the festival celebrates the people's role as protector and restorer. Rejoice in the kingfisher's annual return to CERES in spring to nest and breed on 22 November at 8 Lee St, Brunswick East, Vic, or visit the website www.ceres.org.au for more information.

ENVIRO HOME INSPIRATION

Thinking of putting a few solar panels on the roof? If you want some ideas for your eco dream home, or if you are thinking of retrofitting your current one, head on down to Hobart City Hall on 8 and 9 November for the Environmental Home Expo. You'll find all you need to know on creating a healthy, environmentally friendly energy-efficient home and community. The expo is run by the Tasmanian Environment Centre, ph: 03-6234-5566.

MALLACOOTA ARTS FESTIVAL

Mallacoota's November Celebration of Forests and Flowers will coincide with the results of the 10th EJ Brady Short Story Writing Competition. The festival is being held on the first weekend in November, and there will be plenty to see and do, as well as readings of the story competition's prize winners. Contact 03-5158-0890 or go to website www.mallacootafestival.org

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COUNTRY LIVING
Planning Well For Happiness

by Karen Long, Miles, Qld.

I thought I'd add my reflections to the country living debate. Some of you might remember my earlier articles about station life and home-based jobs. Self-sufficiency wasn't the reason that we moved to an isolated area, but became a necessity because of it!

We now live outside Miles on 100 acres. Miles is on the western edge of the Darling Downs with a population of about 1500 people. As is the case in most country towns, housing is cheaper than in the city and town blocks of land are larger. Department of Housing (Housing Commission) homes are available for rent to those who meet the criteria and some are also available for purchase. Acreage outside town is also affordable, though after being drought-affected for 18 months most of it is very dry and unproductive at present. House prices range from $50,000 to $80,000. Small holdings to 100 acres with a house cost up to $150,000. You won't find green hills and babbling brooks here though. Most affordable rural land is in the drier parts of the continent, but that doesn't mean it can't be productive. You need to adapt your practices to suit the climate.

Miles has basic shops and services – supermarkets, newsagents, produce stores, pubs, hairdresser, banks, bakery, post office, petrol stations, mechanic, police, doctor, hospital, high and primary schools, council, hardware, fire brigade and a few smaller businesses.

Dreaming of a rural life? Affordable land can be dry, but the locals are friendly.

If you would like to make the move to the country, but need an income, don't expect to find a high-income position as they are few and far between. Expect to be earning in the lower to middle income range. You could have a job already lined up for you, as I did. I'm a teacher, though I wasn't always one, and I gained these skills studying externally while living on a station. There are also railway and council jobs in many small towns, which are widely advertised. Start getting the local paper sent to you before you make your move. A 'work wanted' ad in the paper could also be a place to start. Also, personally visit businesses, put your name down as wanting work and follow up with each business occasionally so they know you are still interested. Many businesses don't advertise positions because they have these lists of people wanting work and simply contact someone from the list when a position arises.

Your particular state's rural newspaper is also useful. In Queensland it is the *Queensland Country Life* (QCL). It has job vacancies in rural areas all over the state and some in other states. These jobs may be in towns or on farms or properties.

Not sure whether you would like a particular area? Why not take a caretaking job? These are advertised in many rural papers. Most come with a

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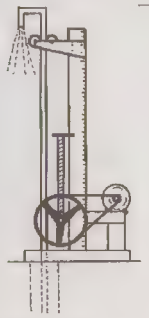

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dwelling, which is rent free, and some also have free electricity and meat. It all depends on the amount of work you are required to do. This would allow you to get a feel for an area and its community.

When thinking of a way to generate an income in your new locale, don't forget the current skills and experience you might have to offer. Also, when planning a move try to gain some skills that might be useful in your new place of abode while you are waiting to move. It's easier to visit TAFE and other institutions while in the city than in the country. Don't forget correspondence courses as well. Knowledge isn't a burden, it doesn't weigh anything, so try to be a life-long learner and gain skills and knowledge wherever possible.

Some examples of people having used current skills to generate employment in this area include a beauty therapist and masseuse who offered her services at a local hairdresser and now works part time there; people with musical aptitude taking students for guitar and piano lessons; suitably qualified people opening a natural therapies clinic; property sitting by people with appropriate skills, allowing the owners to take a holiday; house and business premises cleaning, gardening and lawn mowing services; in-home computer assistance; swimming tuition; bookkeeping; family day care; physiotherapy; exercise classes; tank cleaning; truck and machinery hire and cartage; horse shoeing; riding classes; agisting horses; preparing livestock for shows; and tutoring for school students after school. Many of these services don't require specific qualifications, just knowledge and experience. Don't forget casual work such as fruit and vegetable picking, cotton chipping, abattoir work and other seasonal activities.

So be creative, think laterally and be flexible and open-minded about country living. With planning and forethought it can be done. Don't set the goal posts too high and do be adaptable to change. Don't have the vision that you will be able to live more cheaply than in the city and survive on welfare payments – you won't. Become an active community member, get involved in your new area and be happy!

GARDEN TIPS

SLUG AND SNAIL BAIT

In a cup of boiling water dissolve one teaspoon of Vegemite, one teaspoon of salt and one teaspoon of sugar. Add another cup of cold water and place mixture in shallow containers around seedlings or seed beds.

HOT PEPPER SPRAY

To keep cabbages pest free, turn to your spice rack. Studies conducted at Auburn University Alabama found that McCormack brand hot red pepper protected cabbages just as well as standard insecticides.

Cabbages were sprayed weekly with red pepper, *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), garlic juice and neem extract, along with standard synthetic chemical insecticide lambda-cyholothrin, to test how these substances prevented damage by cabbage loopers, diamondback moth larvae and imported cabbage worms.

Two years of testing showed that red pepper, Bt and garlic all resulted in equivalent or lower insect feeding damage than the chemical standard. Neem, however, did not work as well. The pepper spray was made by mixing two tablespoons of hot red pepper and six drops of dishwashing detergent with 4.5 litres of water. Let sit overnight, then stir to dissolve as much pepper as possible. The study found weekly spraying with the pepper solution would protect all brassica crops from common cabbage pests.

PAWPAW POSSUM SCARER

Got possums in your pawpaws? Try this. Tie inflated yellow balloons around your tree. The possums will try and chomp on them, the balloon will explode and the possums will be repelled. Could have entertainment value as well.

COFFEE KEEPS SLUGS AWAY

Solutions of caffeine have been found effective in killing or repelling slugs and snails when applied to foliage or the soil. Caffeine is a natural product, so might have potential as an environmentally acceptable alternative toxicant for the control of slugs and snails, unlike most commercial products, which contain either metaldehyde or methiocarb, the residues of which are not permitted in US food crops.

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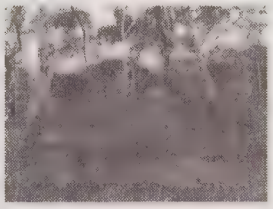

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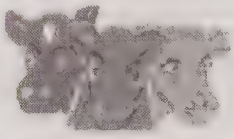

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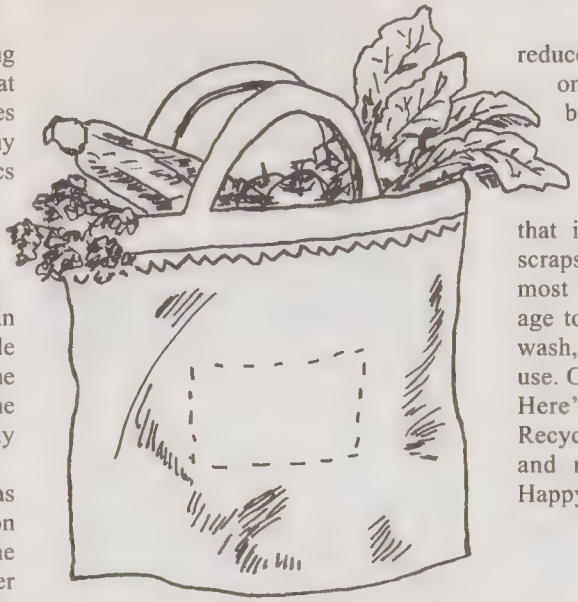
Make Do, Make A Bag

by Val Smetheram, Wishart, Qld.

Forget about plastic bags, fabric ones are more stylish and better for the environment.

'Wow! Isn't that clever?' the young woman remarked. She was looking at my large canvas bag of fruit and vegies in my shopping trolley, along with my other homemade cloth bags. (No plastics thanks!) She was impressed and wanted to know more. I explained that this is my small contribution towards caring for the environment. Most of us, after all, can only act in small ways, but if we all made a little effort it could add up to a lot. 'Hey,' she said, 'I could do that too'. She isn't the first to comment on this, and hopefully the idea will spread.

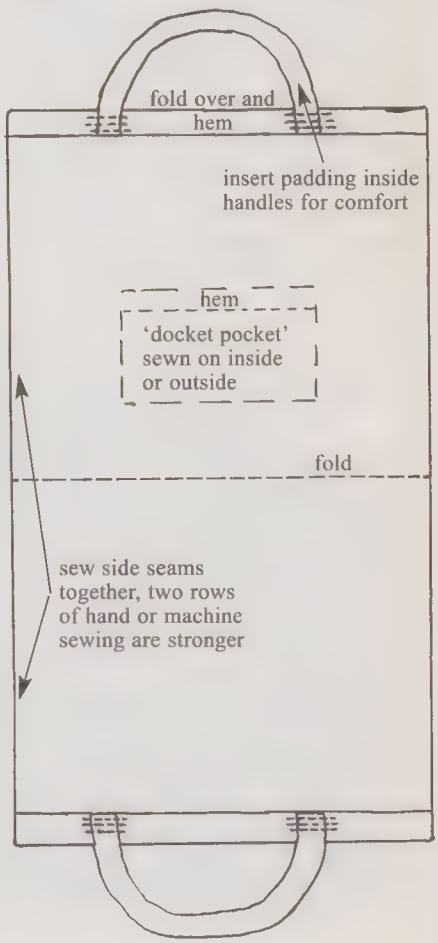


On shopping day I carry the canvas bag for the fruit and vegies, two cotton bags for supermarket goods, plus one thickly padded bag for the freezer items. All have well-padded handles and are sewn several times over in the seams where the strength is most needed. I haven't had one collapse yet, although I often see plastic bags split under a little weight. On one side I sew a reasonable sized 'docket pocket', so if I'm asked to produce a docket it's readily to hand. I know I can't claim credit for this good idea, but good ideas should be shared and I'd like to do just that. I also save clean paper bags and reuse them again and again.

Probably way down deep in my memory there's a faint recollection of my mum during wartime sewing up shopping bags. My generation was lucky in that respect, I feel, as most of us would have a very good background in what is now called recycling. Didn't we watch our parents use and reuse just about everything? Both my parents and parents-in-law were resourceful and self-sufficient in so many ways. They had to be of course, and we, their children, grew up learning these things by observation. We didn't dream that we'd be doing it all again in our later years. However, we are all realising that we have to care for our resources and not waste or misuse anything. As children we were taught not to waste a thing and that included money, which was very hard-earned. Spending carefully was a must. 'Save a little spend a little,' my father cautioned us – good advice that still holds today. In our nearly 30 years of marriage we've done just that and gained a modest but comfortable home, a few possessions and no debts.

Of course, if you live that way, you appreciate everything you have and tend to enjoy it more. Both our fathers had their home workshop and made all sorts of things that were unobtainable during the war. Necessity brings out all kinds of abilities in people doesn't it? Our mothers pulled apart old clothes and made garments for the children. I did the same when I was very short of cash and my boys were small (no sewing machine either). It just seemed the automatic thing to do after having watched my mother doing it.

But . . . back to the plastic bags. Recently we heard that local authorities are considering a 25-cent charge for each plastic bag in an effort to reduce their use. It's really in everyone's interest to train themselves before this happens. If you're already used to carrying a cloth bag or two, it's not going to affect you is it? I'm fairly sure that in most homes there would be scraps of suitable material. Even the most 'unhandy' of sewers could manage to run up a few of these. Easy to wash, easy to fold flat, comfortable to use. Cost? Nothing except a little time. Here's hoping the habit rubs off. Recycling? It's just the old 'make-do and mend' with a different name. Happy and successful sewing!


fold over and hem
insert padding inside handles for comfort
hem
'docket pocket' sewn on inside or outside
fold
sew side seams together, two rows of hand or machine sewing are stronger

Crock Pot Bush Pudding

by Cassandra Turnbull, Kingsholme, Qld.

It's rich and definitely not for those watching their waistlines, but my bush pudding makes a great gift. When Christmas comes around each year I often scratch my head for gifts to give friends. Yes, I can always buy them something. But to make them a present they will enjoy just seems that little more special and personal. It's easy enough to get at least three, maybe four, small puddings from this one recipe. When cooked up with your choice of bushfood and neatly wrapped in green or red cellophane with a red, green or tartan bow, this gift looks and tastes fantastic. It's dark, almost black, in colour and very hard (near impossible) to ruin, burn or otherwise destroy. (My kind of recipe!) Add an Australian bushfood ingredient and suddenly you'll have an original bush pudding! Anyway, it's a nice idea to give your pudding a label, which can be tied on along with the bow, if you're giving it away.

Some of the Australian ingredients that could be added are Davidson's plum, wattle seed, wild lime (instead of the lemon or orange), lilly-pilly or macadamia. Make sure you know what it is you are using as we wouldn't want

to poison anyone! Don't add too much extra ingredient or you'll ruin the consistency and all you really want is a taste. A good idea is to swap ingredients rather than add. Substitute the wild lime for the orange, or a third of a cup of the mixed fruit for a third of a cup of crushed macadamias, or half a cup of mixed fruit for half a cup of a mixture of diced lilly-pilly, wattle seed, Davidson's plum and macadamias. Whatever you decide, remember the longer you cook your pud the darker and richer it gets, so go for your life. I'm sure you and your lucky friends (lucky because you resisted eating the lot yourself) will find this pudding simply delicious!

BASIC PUDDING RECIPE

5 cups mixed fruit
1 tsp mixed spice
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp ground ginger
125 g butter
1 cup water or orange juice
at least 2 tbsp whisky, rum or brandy (if you use more alcohol reduce the amount of water)
2 eggs
1 cup dark brown sugar
1 tsp bicarbonate soda
1 cup breadcrumbs
1 cup plain flour
grated zest of a lemon (optional, or orange, or both)
extra – your choice of bushfood

You will need foil, string to tie foil on, crock pot, tins or coffee cups that fit in your crock pot, ribbon and cellophane if giving as a gift.

Simmer fruit, spice, butter and liquids for about 10 minutes. Then put this simmered mixture into a big bowl with all the remaining ingredients. Mix and pour into a well-greased cake tin that fits into your crock pot, or find smaller tins that will all fit into the crock pot, maybe four smaller tins. I've used old enamel bowls (like those you find in camp shops) and ceramic coffee mugs. Whatever you use, grease them, then pour in the mixture. Cover each tin with foil and tie the foil on with a piece of string. Then into the crock pot it goes!

Fill the crock pot with water to a few centimetres from the top of your tins. Set your crock pot on low and leave it all night. Change it to high the next morning for another two hours. When your pudding/s have cooled they're ready to be turned out, but be careful. Run a sharp knife around the inside of each pudding before turning them out and then carefully slide them out of the tins.

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My Favourite Brassica

by Toni Gurren, Paradise, Tas.

After radish, oft-neglected kale is *the* brassica for beginners. I can say this with full confidence because my kale plants are magnificent and, believe me, I am a beginner. My red cabbages were heartlessly eaten alive, my brussels sprouts generously provided five-star B & B accommodation for countless uninvited guests, and my kohlrabi and swedes squatted interminably like bonsai curiosities. Well, while all this was happening in my brassica patch, the kale, ah, the kale . . . it grew and grew and curled and curled to bountiful perfection. I fell in love. And like all new lovers I now want to shout and tell the world about my new-found joy.

WHY GROW KALE?

There are three very good reasons to grow kale.

Productivity

My love is not just puppy love, it has a very solid foundation. At the same time that I became concerned about eating only organically grown food, I became aware that brassicas, that family of vegetables with highly esteemed anticancer qualities, are a vital daily dietary item in a world teeming with cancer-causing agents, many of them unavoidable. But alas, organically grown brassicas are simply not often available in my local shops, and I've already told you about my efforts to grow them. Incidentally, these very efforts helped me to realise just how much in the way of chemicals must be used on those luscious commercially grown cabbages and cauliflowers that gleam at us enticingly from the shelves of our supermarkets and fruit and veg shops.

However, at the time of writing, easy-to-grow kale has provided me with a continuous supply of green leaves for the past seven months, and looks like being productive for many more months. This is the most compelling reason to grow kale: it is the perfect brassica stand-by for when other home-grown brassicas fail and the shops let us down.

Beauty

The second reason to grow kale is its beauty. Why leave aesthetics behind at the gate to the vegie patch? Kale is a most handsome plant, whether it be the culinary or ornamental variety.

Taste

Third, kale is yummy. Well, that's my opinion. As taste is always a very individual thing, I won't try to sell you on this one.

GROWING KALE

Okay, now that I hope I'm more than halfway towards convincing you that kale is none other than superplant itself – even if not quite the answer to world hunger – what do you need to know to grow it?

Like most vegies, kale likes a fertile, well-drained soil. I did not put much work into building up my naturally fertile soil, but I was careful to mix in a few buckets of well-rotted cow manure before planting and to toss around a few handfuls of compost during late summer. You can direct sow, or transplant seedlings in spring or early autumn. I transplanted mine after sprouting them on a sunny windowsill, then neglecting them until they were half-starved and impossibly lanky and spindly. Pity finally compelled me to plant out the yellowing specimens. They 'took' quickly and impressively, my first inkling that this is a tough no-nonsense beginner's plant.

Most varieties of kale will grow to about 60 centimetres tall and almost as wide, so they take up a decent amount of space. I planted mine too close (such tiny malnourished babies they were!), but they simply leant out onto the pathway to get their share of sunlight. Those with the most space grew huge; those with less space and also less

Toni Gurren in her garden of colourful curly leafed kale.

nutrients grew obligingly smaller. Kale will grow in cold to temperate regions: it likes full sun and can take heat, but frost sweetens it. With good mulching kale requires only the occasional deep watering during the summer months to keep it going.

The books say that kale is subject to all the diseases of the brassicas, and to rotate as you do with other cabbage-family plants. No doubt this is true. But, most significantly, while my red cabbage was annihilated by caterpillars, my kale suffered only minor damage. Yes, yes, I know, I should have gone out there every day and picked off the little blighters, then looked up books on how to spend my Sunday afternoons making organic antibug concoctions, and diligently followed through on some promising glimpses in my garden of how companion planting really can work . . . but I'm talking here about the *lazy* person's guide to brassica growing, right? In any case, the caterpillar season was soon over and, as it is the newer young kale leaves that get picked and eaten, there was very little impact on productivity compared to the decimated cabbages, which simply did not recover. Another bonus of growing kale is that its big, open leaves make it easy to check, prior to meal preparation, for the odd morsel of wriggling protein.

PICKING KALE

Kale leaves toughen with age and, after a little experimenting, it became clear that it is the leaves in the middle of the stem that are the best to pick. Leave the big, tough, dark green leaves at the bottom to fuel the growing of the new, lighter-coloured leaves at the top. It is no doubt best to keep the plant well-picked in order to encourage the constant development of tasty new leaves. But as I was never any good at regular zucchini picking, why should I be any good at regular kale picking? The good thing is, it doesn't matter. This is an incredibly productive plant and whatever you do there will always be green leaves for the taking. What's more, the thick stems snap off with a most satisfying, succulent crunch.

Kale produces a wealth of decorative but tasty leaves – the secret to success is regular picking. The inside leaves are the most tender.

EATING KALE

Cook kale in the same way as other members of the cabbage family – lightly boiled or steamed (the best way), or added to stir fries and casseroles a few minutes before they finish cooking.

You can even eat it raw in salads. I mix chopped kale leaves with various other salad greens, carrot, spring onions and anything else I can scavenge from the garden, then add a garlic, lemon juice and olive oil dressing. My husband prefers soya mayonnaise, but it's all delicious.

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North Deep Creek

by Di Woodstock, North Deep Creek, Qld.

Paying your property off before moving makes your piece of heaven easier to develop.

Doesn't the name 'North Deep Creek' sound lovely? My husband Woody and I are lucky enough to have it as part of our address. After reading many other stories in *Grass Roots* over the years, I felt it was time to put across our story in the hope that it might guide other people who are questing after their piece of heaven.

About five years ago we bought our 40 acres just outside Gympie, Queensland. We were living in Gosford, New South Wales, and both commuting to work in Sydney on the F3 Freeway for two hours a day. Like a lot of other people, our mortgage was huge and we were living week to week in the rat race. We were both very active members of a wildlife group called WIRES, involved with rescuing and caring for all types of native fauna, and that took up what little money was left over after the bills. A very good friend of ours (the same age as Woody) died after a six-month battle with cancer. This was instrumental in our making the decision to get out of the rat race.

The Woodstock home at North Deep Creek, set amidst productive permaculture gardens. If only they could keep some of the bounty for themselves.

We didn't have much money so the idea of building our own rustic cabin on a bush block somewhere away from people seemed great. Instead, after surfing the Internet, we came across a property advertised as 40 acres of permaculture for under $150,000. We drove up to look at the place after emailing the owners and spent five hours walking over the whole property, then made them an offer, which they accepted. Then the shock set in! All the pros were listed: lots of water, lots of land, a running creek, a good house, out of town. The only con: we didn't have work!

A few months later we moved into our new home in North Deep Creek. Typical stories followed, such as the birds eating all the fruit, the first snake sighting (great for us as we love them), losing the car in the creek during a flood,

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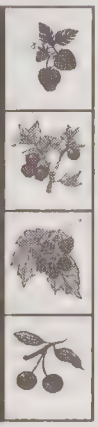

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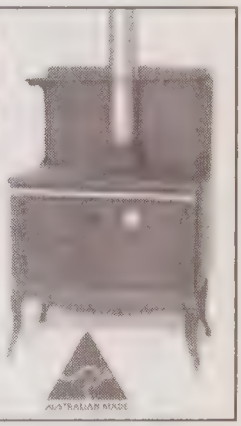

the hares eating the new vegie patch, and the foxes eating Gorgeous George and all of his Araucana ladies. Now we support the local people who grow vegies and chooks by buying from the markets.

Our nearest neighbours are across the gully, but just a phone call away. The community is good and the local people very colourful. Our 40 acres is becoming a haven for over 90 species of birds and numerous mammals and reptiles, and is slowly being revegetated and weeded of thistles and groundsel bushes. The water is getting low in the dams, because of the drought, and the creek hasn't run since the car got washed away, but we still love it and the thrill of watching the little trees growing is worth bottling.

Our only regret is that we didn't own enough of our house in Gosford to come here debt-free. Because of this, we are both back in the rat race of working full time in town to pay the bills and the mortgage. This means that the weekends are full of work that needs to be done, and that doesn't leave much time for enjoying the quiet magic of the place.

Our suggestion to anyone thinking of moving onto acreage is to try to own as much of it as possible before moving onto it because all sorts of expenses happen then. A tractor (or finance to pay a slasher), petrol, shopping and all the other little bits you need to survive add up. This is especially so if, like us, you are really city people simply relocating to the bush and you still want your luxuries such as running water and a flushing loo. But, if you do decide it's what you want, simply do it and enjoy it as we have.

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ENVIRO ACTION

MELBOURNE FROG CENSUS

The Melbourne Water frog census is a community-based program in partnership with Melbourne Waterwatch and the Amphibian Research Centre. Each autumn and spring volunteers tape frog calls from their selected area of waterway and send the tapes to the Amphibian Research Centre, via Melbourne Water. This information is collated to help authorities monitor the health of Melbourne's waterways and the distribution of rare or endangered frog species. Participants can choose whether they take advantage of frog identification training days run by the Amphibian Research Centre. Volunteers are provided with a kit of necessary items, but do need their own tape recorder.

Potential volunteers can phone Melbourne Water on 131-722, or register online at: www.frogs.melbournewater.com.au

FAUNA FOR FLORA

Fauna for Flora is a new federal project aimed at inspiring people in urban areas to act in ways that support their local environment. Flora for Fauna will demonstrate to families, schools and other groups ways they can change their own garden (and the way they garden) to attract Australian wildlife using appropriate Australian plants.

For more details write to Landscape Conservation Section, Environment Australia, GPO box 787, Canberra 2601. Alternatively, ph: 02-7274-2315, or email: bernadette.o'leary@ea.gov.au

ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDS SCHEME

A new scheme underway in 16 council areas of northern NSW and southern Qld is aimed at slowing the spread of environmental weeds. The Bushland Friendly Nursery Scheme (BFNS) encourages nursery proprietors to voluntarily not sell listed plants and to raise public awareness of the issue. There is a coloured identification booklet detailing 83 undesirable species. Registered nurseries can promote themselves as being bushland friendly and are put on a list that goes to the local council for distribution to the public. The intention is for the scheme to expand Australia-wide.

For more information, to register, or to obtain the booklet ph: Shane Rennie, 02-6685-9999, or visit the website: www.bfns.org.au

LANDHOLDERS FUNDED TO HELP ENVIRONMENT

Under the FarmBis scheme landholders are subsidised to attend courses in various aspects of natural resource management to learn how to effectively address environmental issues on their properties. Generally, landowners must own or manage more than two hectares of rural land in order to qualify for subsidies of up to 85 percent of the cost of the learning activity. FarmBis runs in each state and is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments.

For more information visit the website: www.farmbis.gov.au

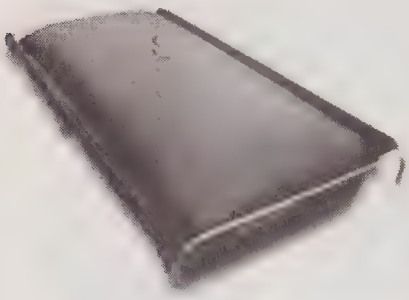
PET RABBITS ILLEGAL

Keeping pet rabbits is still illegal in Qld under the new Land Protection Act 2002. From July 2003 the maximum penalty for keeping a rabbit without a permit has increased from $3750 to $30,000. Organisations and businesses can apply for a permit to keep rabbits for scientific research, public education or public display purposes, but strict conditions apply. Kindergartens and other educational institutions are no longer permitted to keep domestic rabbits and permits will not be given for keeping rabbits as pets or for farming.

For more information on rabbits in Qld ph: 1800-999-367, or visit the website: www.nrm.qld.gov.au/pests/legislation

ROUND THE MARKET PLACE

We hope you enjoy this feature introducing new products relevant to readers' lifestyles and interests.



RAIN REVIVA

This innovative flexible water storage bladder could be the ideal solution for those wanting to be more self-sufficient in water usage but with little space for conventional tanks. The bladder or 'sac' is made from tough polypropylene, can be folded or rolled to fit through restricted openings, will conform to the shape of irregular foundations and can be used either unsupported or with a simple support structure. These features make the Rain Reviva ideal to use under houses or decks. Standard sizes are 2500 and 3500 litres, but sacs can be made to suit most size requirements and can be linked for greater flexibility. The system can be easily linked to existing watering systems and can even be modified to use with greywater. The complete DIY kit includes bladder, pump, pipes, frame and costs approximately $1700 for any size from 2500 to 3500 litres.

For more information contact Rain Reviva on 03-9735-1111.

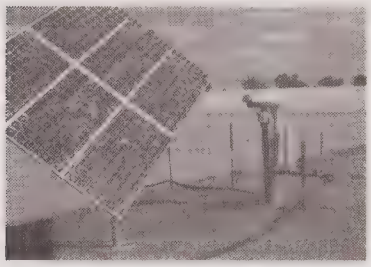
WATTWORKS WATER RECYCLING SYSTEM

The Wattworks greywater system stores shower and bath water in a holding tank from where it is reused to flush the toilet, thereby reducing water use for the average household by about 20 percent. The unit self-empties every 24 hours, either into the septic/sewer or to a garden watering system, to prevent odour build-up and meet EPA requirements. No special council or EPA permits are needed. Two kits are available, both include tank, filter, pump, controller, timer and solenoids. The single-cistern system costs approximately $1870 and the double-cistern system $2220.

For more information contact Australian Rotomoulding Industries Plastank P/L on 03-5941-4967. Website: www.wattworks.com.au

SOLAR PUMPS

Sun Mill solar pumps, manufactured by Solar Energy Systems Ltd, combine the principles of a windmill with the latest solar technology incorporating a two-way valve that enables the pump to deliver water on both the upward and the downward strokes. The solar panels produce electricity to power a DC electric motor, which, via a gearbox, rotates a stroke bar and drives a crank arm that raises and lowers a piston inside a chamber, thus drawing and delivering water. It is a low-tech, easily operated device needing little attention or maintenance, making it suitable for remote areas where dependable water pumping is needed. The Sun Mill range also includes a windmill pump kit and a submersible solar pumping system.



For more information freecall 1800-454-161. Website: www.sesltd.com.au

WATER SAVER PRODUCTS

A variety of small devices manufactured by Shower Innovations P/L will enable all households to reduce their water usage. The WaterSaver sink nozzles screw onto the end of a sink tap to aerate water and reduce consumption while vegies are being washed or dishes rinsed under running water. Two models are available, one at $21.50 and one at $15, both plus $5.50 delivery.

The Toilet Flow Controller, for single-flush cisterns with central overflow chamber, will reduce toilet water usage by 25 to 50 percent. Cost is $12.50, plus $5.50 delivery.

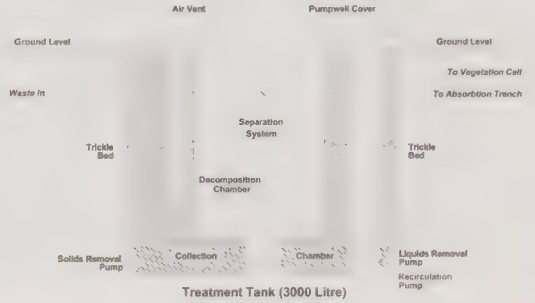
Two AAA-rated WaterSaver Showerhead Kits are available for use with mains pressure storage hot water units with pressure above 150 kpa. One model has three spray settings and costs $65 plus delivery; the deluxe model has six spraysettings and costs $90 plus delivery.

For information on any of these products call 131-851 (Vic only) or 1800-637-064.
Website: www.southeastwater.com.au

SIMPLY NATURAL WASTE WATER TREATMENT

In situations where a septic system is needed the Aqua Clarus Simply Natural waste water treatment system provides an effective alternative. The system aerobically treats all domestic plumbing wastes without odour and without harming the environment, making it ideal for areas where septic systems are banned or discouraged by regulating authorities. Solids and liquids are separated at point of entry, providing two separate waste streams inside the one tank. It produces primary effluent of very high quality that is automatically pumped to the land application – a vegetation cell and a subsoil absorption trench. Basic cost, depending on site requirements, starts at $5280 plus delivery. A further development (available next year) will treat the waste water to a tertiary level suitable for above-ground irrigation. Solar pumping kits are also available.

For more information contact 07-3804-1522 or 1300-368-158. Website: www.aquaclarus.com



RECENT RELEASES

Titles described can be ordered through your nearest bookstore.

ORGANIC GARDENING

Christine and Michael Lavelle

This lushly illustrated hardback combines inspiration and practicality in equal measures. A UK publication, it is aimed at a cooler climate than ours, but is not specific to the northern hemisphere and contains so much useful information that it is well worth getting hold of. The book essentially covers everything from planning and planting to harvesting and maintenance in natural organic gardens. It also contains a directory of vegetables, herbs and one of fruit with an excellent pruning guide for each species. There are step-by-step photos for the various gardening techniques and detailed instructions for creating and maintaining three types of gardens: ornamental, wildlife and kitchen. Organic soil management and plant health are particularly well covered, as is pruning and espaliering. In fact, this is a superb reference for beginner and experienced gardener alike.

H/b, 256pp, Pan Macmillan Australia, Level 18, St Martins Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney 2000. Ph: 02-9285-9100. RRP: $45.00.

STRESS-FREE FOODS

Eat to relax with delicious recipes and hints

Lee Gold

Feeling a little stressed out? Here's the answer – this book combines holistic methods for destressing your life with a collection of 100 tasty recipes containing ingredients guaranteed to help you relax. If creamy asparagus soup, lemon honey lamb with garlic spaghetti and pear and ginger pudding have beneficial qualities then this reviewer is prepared to give it a try. Apparently, even the process of preparing the dishes will help you chill out. The recipes come from a variety of cultures, sound quite delicious, and feature a number of vegetarian meals. The health related section includes practical exercises, a 14-day strategy to help you unwind and lots of fun tips, hints and remedies. Stress is a contributing factor to many major illnesses; this book provides a tasty and accessible approach to tackling it.

P/b, 234pp, Pan Macmillan Australia, Level 18, St Martins Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney 2000. Ph: 02-9285-9100. RRP: $16.95.

A-Z OF CHEMICALS IN THE HOME

Total Environment Centre

You don't have to be sensitive to allergens to want to make an informed choice about what chemicals to have in your home, especially when a wide range of the chemical substances encountered in daily life are potentially harmful. This useful guide tells you exactly what is in common household products, how dangerous they are, their impact on our health and the environment, and whether there is a less toxic alternative. It also solves common dilemmas like how to dispose of chemicals safely, what sort of fire extinguisher to have, what 'sick building syndrome' is, how to recycle phone batteries and why there are additives in food. This edition has been completely revised and also contains a glossary, resource list and some useful web addresses. Put it next to the first-aid kit and don't forget to stock up on face masks.

P/b, 180pp, Choice Books, Pan Macmillan Australia, Level 18, St Martins Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney 2000. Ph: 02-9285-9100. RRP $22.00.

STARTING OUT WITH . . .

Bruce Pattinson

If the kids are thinking of getting a new pet, make sure they read one of these guides first. This series on caring for animals includes titles on chickens, dogs, horses, waterfowl, cavies, saltwater fish, axolotols and frogs, tropical fish and goldfish. The books are designed to help beginners get the most out of their pets and make the experience an enjoyable one for both parties. Each title includes information on which variety to choose; some background on the animal or fish; proper feeding, housing and equipment; training; breeding; health and, of course, problem solving. The information is concise and presented in a very readable manner, often in point form, so the series would be especially suited to young people. The dual emphasis is on enjoyment and responsibility. Poor reproduction of photos is the only downside to these otherwise excellent booklets.

P/b, 60pp, Five Senses Education Pty Ltd, 2/195 Prospect Highway, Seven Hills 2147. Ph: 02 9838 9265. RRP: $8.95.

HOW CAN I USE HERBS IN MY DAILY LIFE?

Isabell Shipard

GR reader Isabell Shipard has run a herb farm for 25 years and here she puts her extensive knowledge to good use in what is possibly the most comprehensive herb book in existence. Yes, over 500 herbs are covered in generous detail. Written in a highly readable style that combines practical information on each species' growing habit and medicinal and culinary uses with anecdotes and historical curiosities, the book will be of use to anyone interested in natural health and how to make best use of their garden. Likewise, if you are curious about some of the less well-known herbs, such as pandan leaves, kava or dragon fruit, this is your reference. Colour photos and black and white drawings complement the text.

P/b, 380pp, David Stewart, Shipard's Herb Farm, PO Box 66, Nambour 4560. Ph: 07-5441-1101. RRP: $39.00.

DOWN HOME ON THE FARM

by Megg Miller.

'Enough, we've had enough', I've been muttering as I've trudged in ankle-deep mud or fought my way through rampant weeds in search of chook sheds. We've had rain, lots of rain, and dusty yards have become a quagmire. I'm not complaining, just wishing for a dry period to catch up on jobs, especially mowing, so the next heavy downpour can be fully appreciated. The paddocks are green again, crops are flourishing and most dams are looking good. Even my nearby dam is resembling a lake.

The skies have been surprisingly generous. Heavy falls have bucketed down time and again, and the nearby hills have been drenched so thoroughly that water has flowed into all the local creeks and even onto the old, normally dry, watercourses that meander through farming land. When there is enough rain for the watercourses to be filled, local roads are cut and I can count on modest flooding to snake through the nearby paddocks and finally spill over into my dam. I grabbed the camera and rushed out to take a picture as water rushed over the side of the dam like a waterfall, but no, the batteries were flat. For nearly two years sapling gums had been growing in the empty crater, a remarkable sight, but now that it's full there's no sign of greenery in the murky depths. There will be no need now to tap the sides of the tank each week to check the water level, nor to have regular visits from the tanker to replenish supplies. I hope readers have shared some of our rain and are optimistic about the months ahead.

Saturday has become mowing day – if it's dry. I can think of better ways to spend a few hours, but tall grass in the paddocks is an invitation for the foxes to call. And call they have, coming in from the back undetected and grabbing a couple of geriatric old birds. Such easy pickings made a particular predatory visitor very cocksure, and one morning I was met by feathers everywhere and several dead or dying birds. The young stock roosting in the trees must have panicked and flown down, with dire results. I can promise there won't be further visits from that fox, but a second one grabbed a goose from a nest in the paddock and killed her, so greater vigilance will be needed this spring. She had strayed into a clump of bushes and made a nest and I hadn't missed her. Mowing is, without doubt, a necessary activity and I'm lucky to have an old ride-on to make the job easier. It's puzzling, though, why rain falls so often on a weekend. It makes mowing mighty difficult.

Maria Maremma is still guarding the place, but her woof is now just a wuff and probably a cursory one at that. She's as deaf as a post, slightly arthritic, doesn't see me until I'm almost level with her, and is spending more time fretting about what the cats and sheep are being fed than keeping an eye on her world. She's likely to want to come indoors and snooze on the bathroom mat at night, quite a turnaround after so many years as a paddock dog. Geriatric she may be, but if there is a chance of getting in to scoff the cats' food, she's as quick as lightning. They're fussy moggies, twitching whiskers at whatever is offered, and are outraged when the dog comes through eating everything and drinking up their water. I've left a rug and an old sleeping bag out on the verandah for Maria and also sewed together shadecloth and filled it with straw. No, she didn't like these and will sleep in the dirt and feathers under the old office – except, of course, when she feels like a little luxury indoors and can dream and scheme about getting the cats' dinner.

When I was offered a couple of sheep recently it sounded a godsend. Less mowing, and maybe they would trample down some of the mallow that is growing in places inaccessible to mowers. Dora and Flora are old retired sheep from Collingwood Children's Farm. Old maybe, but sharp as tacks. They're English Leicesters and originally came from Ethel Stephenson near Benalla. Ethel was in GR 156 with her Leicesters and also on the cover of GR 151. Rather ironically, years ago when we had black sheep Ethel purchased stock from us, even at one stage sending a photo of 'Little Megg' the coloured ewe. Now I'm shepherding her stock. Dora and Flora are not like Merle my old sheep; they're confident, uncompromising and want variety. They rush to see what's in their feed bowls, then rush off to eat the goose

Dora and Flora the English Leicester grass cutters – aren't they just gorgeous? Now where did I store the old spinning wheel?

pellets. Maria's nose has been very out of joint; the sheep crowd near the red wheelbarrow that's always been *her* focus of bonding. When the barrow moves, she gets up to follow. And the fact that the sheep are given bread has caused insane jealousy. The unrest came to a head when the sheep approached a plastic water bucket. Maria leapt at them, snarling and snapping. I yelled at Maria. Dora shook her head threateningly and stamped the ground. She stood up to Maria, and the old dog backed off and retired to the trees, offended. The sheep, no doubt, have had to contend with noisy city children and silly dogs and are not going to run.

This morning I had to spend time trimming away soiled fleece from Dora's personal region. Loose manure caused by the change in feed had formed into dags on the wool that were catching her urine: a perfect situation for fly strike. I've got skinned knuckles and broken nails because she determinedly refused to be turned over. With old Merle you could grab a leg or two and she would collapse – not Dora. She's looking clean and stylish from behind now and should last until shearing, which will be in November. Phew, a few weeks to get a decent yard up and the sheep trained to enter it for food. How on earth does Ethel manage a whole flock of strong sassy sheep?

All through catching and tending Dora I was encouraged and gobbled to by a watching turkey. Not so long ago I had to catch 10 geese and, while running madly around sheds catching them, I was pursued by not one, but three, young turkey gobblers. You could have sworn there were 30. Again I was catching geese, but at night, and these cheerful noisy birds gobbled with excitement from the trees at all the rushing. I've only got a couple free ranging as laying has started and they can't be spared for fox fast food. The numbers are down (truly, they are) and most in the sheds are old birds. The young ones are such fun, and it wouldn't be spring without a couple of poults – and even a couple of goslings and chickens. Just a couple, no more, I promise.

You might recall I've been renovating, in fact we've all been renovating, Suni and Marcel as well. Is there a special term that describes 'rest from renovating'? I've just come from their rural wilderness after sharing a conversation about long grass and mowing and there not being enough time to complete indoor tasks. Last year we seemed to spend all our weekends carrying water to plants, now it's cutting and mowing. The kids are super busy and I've been seeing far too much of my office desk. 'One job a week, chick, just try and do one, it doesn't even have to be a big one', is the only advice I can offer. I rewired a door on an old chook house this morning and managed to trap a hen and rooster. Not a bad morning's work at all, but it should have been done weeks ago.

When I met up with Suni today we went out for a coffee and admired the day. The sun was shining, encouraging overgrown lawns and weed-filled paddocks to greater growth. When would we find time to tile or finish painting, let alone give the house a quick dust? Personally, I view the inconvenience and chaos of renovating as an opportunity to ease up on housekeeping duties. After all, what's the point cleaning or tidying if it's simply going to be messed up again?

'Well', said Suni, 'I find it makes twice as much work trying to keep the place clean and neat'.

I just shook my head. The trick, I'm told, is to keep a ladder in a prominent place in your house, then ignore the dusting permanently. 'Sorry', you say to callers, 'you've just caught me in the middle of some renovations'. I love it!

PENPALS

I live in the country and would like a penpal. I am in my twilight years and interested in global issues and the natural world. Not overly impressed with technology or 'progress'. I prefer to write letters rather than use email.

M Clark
PO Box 63, ORROROO 5431.

I am 20 years old, love the outdoors, am mechanically minded and have various alternative lifestyle skills. I am looking for penpals with similar interests.

Randie Hallam,
10 Prince St, STAWELL 3380.

I am a 34-year-old Taurean man, a Christian, and would like some penpals. I love the bush, farming, growing plants, cooking and keeping fit.

Adam J Bochenek,
No 138628, Junee Correctional Centre, Park Ln, JUNEE 2663.

I'm married with no kids, a 33-year-old female who loves everything green. Would love to chat with someone into self-sufficiency in a small garden, frogs, orchids, gardening in general and living as green as they can. All letters will be answered.

Sharyn McDonald,
10 Terry St, PEARCEDALE 3912.

Young single man (24) living in Christian community in Tasmania seeks penpals interested in traditional family values, gardening, and a clean life in the country.

Joshua Morris,
C/- Post Office, GLENDEVIE 7109.
Email: patriarchs@hotmail.com

GRASSIFIEDS

HOW TO ADVERTISE

Use the form provided below, or a separate sheet of paper, to print your advertisement clearly, **not in block capitals**, including correct punctuation. If you have more than one ad please print each one on a separate page. Remember to include an address or phone number in your advertisement. Count the number of words and multiply by 85 cents per word (phone number counted as one word) to work out the total cost of your advertisement. Send **with payment** to Grass Roots, PO Box 117, Seymour 3661, before the deadline and we'll include your advertisement in the next issue of Grass Roots. **Deadline for GR 160 is 31 October, 2003.** Please do not fax ads.

Sender's Name ..... For issues no/s .....

Address ..... Classification .....

..... Postcode ..... Cost .....

Cost for advertisements is 85c per word

PROPERTY FOR SALE

NEW SOUTH WALES

NORTHERN NSW, 1100 ac of paradise with organic certification; surrounded by nat pk with pristine running water, river flats, water holes & estab kiwi fruit crop. Beautiful timber home, 3 b/rs, cathedral ceiling, mains power, farm machinery. Tenants in Common, 1 share of 12 in MO. Enjoy clean air, water & soil or just invest in a piece of unique landscape. $205,000. Ph: 02-6688-4498.

BRAIDWOOD AREA, 2 lovely ac, 2 b/r home, 2 water tanks, 2 sheds, dam, power & 2 ph lines connected, sealed rd. Young f/trees. $130,000. Ph: 02-4847-1202.

GARDEN OF EDEN (freehold) for $800,000. A magnif 900 sq m homestead (7 b/rs, 3 bathrooms, with accom for 12 people + saltwater pool) set in 1750 ac (708.22 ha) property of secluded, virgin native forest endowed with original flora & fauna. This is a once-in-a-lifetime development opportunity ideal for permaculture community, health retreat B & B, wilderness camping & more. This secluded estate on the edge of Pilliga State Forest near Wee Waa has perennial crk & unlimited drinking water bore, estab poultry run, rabbit hutches, f/trees & screened garden of sandy loam. Ph: 02-6796-2204. Pictures & details on application to: mandelsloh@hotmail.com

JACKADGERY, 485 ac of beautiful natural forest, hills, valleys & streams, backing onto state forest, 15 mins drive from Grafton. $210,000. Ph: 08-8987-3440.

SNOWY MOUNTAINS FOOTHILLS, NSW: Beautiful private 150 ac with sml unique house – 2 b/rs, 2 bathrooms, sound of waterfall! Hydro & solar power, dam & good access, ph. Garden well estab, over 20 yrs, many deciduous trees & natives. Mostly uncleared land with NPWS conservation area, eucalypts & crk. $185,000 ONO. Ph: 02-6688-4549.
Email: dbrown15@vtown.com.au

ORARA VALLEY, 15 ha forest, river frontage, 2 c/vans, 12V solar (GR 139), 15 km Coffs.
Email: aarnaarn@hotmail.com

WERRES CREEK, 3 b/r, lounge, dining, kitchen, bath, laundry, back & front verandah, covered bbq, lge backyard, ducted air conditioning, fully furnished. Hospital, school, railway, shopping all walking distance. WIWO. For quick sale $85,000. Ph: John, 02-6768-7869.

DEEPWATER, NORTHERN NSW: cosy as-new 2 b/r home ¼ ac. All services, shops, schools, 20 mins Glen Innes. $35,000 ONO. Ph: 07-3814-1935, 0412-599-750.

EMMAVILLE: SECLUDED 112 ac, GR paradise, building permit, 2 dams, fully fenced, close amenities, ph. 30 mins Glen Innes. $30,000 ONO. Ph: 07-3814-1935, 0412-599-750.

HINTERLAND BYRON BAY – ecologist's dream farm: 30 ha situated on volcanic red soils on the southern slopes of the Mt Warning caldera, 30 mins west of Byron, 20 mins NE of Lismore. This farm offers 11 ha r/forest biodiversity program with a $45,000 unexpended grant allocation, 15 ha hardwood plantation, 5 ha frost-free subtropical fruit, nut, coffee plantation site, 750 m frontage to Boomerang Crk, an aquatic corridor with perennial flow and superb swimming hole, abundant fauna & avifauna habitat. Cosy but compact tastefully renovated 3 b/r cottage, valley views, seclusion & privacy, choice of local schools, town water, numerous alternative house sites. Potentials incl ecotourist cabins. $495,000. Ph: 02-6685-5448, 0421-569-252.

THORA VALLEY NEAR BELLINGEN. Masterbuilt 2 b/r solar house on long estab MO community. Open-fire, s/c stove, magnif views. Looking for community-minded person/people who, after a suitable period of time renting, wish to become member/s & buy. Close to Steiner & public school. No cats or dogs. $85,000. Ph: 02-6655-9719.

QUEENSLAND

SIMPLY THE BEST IN THE GOLD COAST HINTERLAND: 3 b/r home + manager's quarters set amongst 16 ac virgin r/forest with spectacular nth views you only dream about. Make this place of paradise your reality. Ph: Jim Bartle, 0411-660-171, 07-3866-5807.

NANANGO, lovely level 5 ac, on gentle rise, fully fenced, lge dam, lots of trees, bitumen rd frontage. $23,000. Ph: 08-8987-3440.

GRASSIFIEDS

PROPERTY FOR SALE

QUEENSLAND

BIGGENDEN, 10 lovely ac, gentle hillside, wonderful views, seasonal crk, lge dam, fully fenced, bitumen rd frontage. $33,000. Ph: 08-8987-3440.

WILDERNESS RETREAT, 5 km crk frontage, waterfall, rock pools, abundant deer, wildlife. 302 ha – 2 titles, 3 b/r house, silky oak kitchen, 100 yr old natural pine linings. Hayshed, cattle yards and all plant as going concern. $600,000. Benarkin, Qld. Ph: 07-4163-0576.

STANTHORPE, 37½ ac natural bush in secluded valley, crk. Comfortable 2 b/r home, solar powered, new kitchen, combustion stove & heater. Close to nat pk & wineries, 15 mins town. $125,000. Ph: 07-4683-4254.

DRILLHAM, 20 km west of Miles, ½ ac +. Town school. High school bus to Miles, 100 m off Warrego Hwy. Three b/r +. Tank water, pump to crk, lge sheds connected to house. $54,000 ONO. Ph: 07-4627-6180.

NANANGO, QLD, 8+ ac (with crk), unimproved. Water & elec avail. $36,000. Ph: 02-4990-9635.

HERVEY BAY (RIVER HEADS): Sea & island view, 3 mins to boat ramp & barge to Fraser Island, 2 mins walk to mud crab beds. Modern 3 b/r brick & tile house + lge shed on 800 sq m block with mature trees. Fully renovated $220,000. Ph: 07-4125-8434.

ELEVATED POSITION WITH MAGNIFICENT VIEWS, 17 km sth of Stanthorpe in Granite Belt in secluded bush setting, near vineyards. Large dam. Attractive well-appointed lowset 3 b/r brick & tile home on approx 90 ac. Mains elec + solar. Ornamental pond, 2 new garden sheds. Suitable for retirement, young couple, farming or holiday business. $155,000 ONO. Ph: 07-4681-4491.

AMPHITHEATRE, huge watercatch, Gin Gin area, 30 ac. $26,500. Ph: 02-6629-0274. Email: anchudja@smartchat.com.au

MILLMERRAN, 250 ac, f/hold. $44,800 ONO. Ph: Chris, 08-8948-1609.

VICTORIA

GRAMPIANS REGION: House on 2½ ac near flora reserve. Shed, bungalow, dam, private, 10 mins Stawell. $75,000. Ph: 03-5358-1918.

ST ARNAUD, house & land for sale, approx 6 km from PO, comprising 4 b/rs all with BIRs, full ensuite + WIR to master b/r, study & billiards room, lge kitchen-dining area, Coonara heater in lounge room, 20 sq of living space. House is set on 20 ac with panoramic views, verandahs front & rear. Rainwater supply to house is 70,000 lt, has an excel solar system & wind generator. Olive trees & lavender have been planted. This property offers a comfortable lifestyle with a possible small business enterprise. Forced sale due to ill health. $167,000 ONO. Ph: Lynda or Colin, 03-5495-2556.

DEADLINES: GR 160 – 31 OCTOBER
GR 161 – 19 DECEMBER

TASMANIA

A UNIQUE BUSH PROPERTY WANTED: With or without house. Prefer water views, bordering on reserve or nat pk, & within 40 mins commuting distance of Hobart. Ph: 03-6424-7830.

GUNNS PLAINS, SECLUDED 75 ac, sunny 3 b/r home, numerous outbuildings. Large organic garden, over 100 estab fruit/nut trees. Permanent stream, dam, excel soil. Adjoins Gunns Plains Caves Reserve; near Leven Canyon, Penguin/Cradle Mountain walking track. Organic farming or ecotourism potential. $250,000. Ph: 03-6429-1295.

TASSIE INVESTMENT: 9.62 ac, 8.5 km, 9 mins from Tassie's largest town – Ulverstone. Two perm streams, quantity f/trees, plums, apples, greengages, laurel, apricot, 150 m holly hedge on bndry. Easterly aspect, sheltered, new fences. $80,000. Ph: 03-6425-9154, mob: 0428-293-259.

TASMANIA'S EAST COAST. 90 ac secluded bushland near Coles Bay with shore frontage & bitumen rd access. Phone, 4 dams, cabin, shed etc. 180 km to Hobart or Launceston. Adjacent to nat pk & surf beaches. $130,000. Ph: 08-8388-9289.
Email: privatesale.com.au/02024

GOLCONDA, Tas, beautiful home, Lone Star Rd. In an environmentally friendly valley (home of the Tasmanian circus festival) with neighbouring properties & still private. Fifty ac, pasture, bush, 3 dams (trout) + platypus. Mudbrick/tiles/2 storey, 3 b/r & study, laundry, bathroom, sep toilet, lge living area, cellar, ph, solar & battery bank, combustion stove, sheds, f/trees, blackwoods, sunny northern aspect. Two rooms need minor finishing touches. Expressions of interest: Ph: Steve, 0417-541-075.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

KANGAROO ISLAND, near Penneshaw – 40 ha bush block adjoining conservation park, spectacular close sea views, nth facing sheltered house site, abundant wildlife, peace, deserted beaches, 12 mins to village/ferry. Details & photos. $250,000. Ph: 08-8553-1229.

BUSHLAND RETREAT – $85,000: 684 ac (approx) native bushland property 30 km sth of Bordertown, 99% is under heritage agreement. There is an abundance of wildlife, flora & fauna. Approximately 4 ac cleared, which can be built on subject to appropriate approvals. The entire property is very well fenced with ringlock, wire netting & a lge portion is electrified. Water supply for wildlife comes from a dam. This property is very well suited for a weekend getaway & is priced to sell. Ph: Elders Bordertown, 08-8752-1011, or Scott Richards, 0429-170-399.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS
Please notify us of any change of contact details so we can redirect enquiries. Call us on 03-5792-4000.

FOR RENT/CARETAKER WANTED

EXPERIENCE TASMANIA'S MOUNTAIN LIFESTYLE. Three b/r w/board cottage on sunny 814 sq m block. Located in pretty Maydena (30 mins west of New Norfolk, 60 mins from Hobart). Primary school down the road. Rent $100 per week. Please call Jef & Sara, 02-4971-5861.

AVAILABLE FOR RENT EARLY DECEMBER, southern NSW, 1 hr sth of Cooma. Two storey granite & timber home on 120 ac beautiful bush block. Spring water, wood for heating, cooking & hot water, solar power, generator, gas fridge. Friendly, sml local community. $150 per week, long lease. Ph: 08-8258-7501.

COMMUNITIES/SHARES

VIPASSANA MEDITATION COMMUNITY, members wanted. Alternate retreating with working beautiful, forested, mountain saffron gardens. Stanley, Victoria. Ph: 03-5728-6610.

WILDLIFE PROTECTORS: Help regenerate Limeburners Wilderness Area while living & working on intentional specific land sharing co-op 'Nandiri', 563 ac, next door to Goolawah Co-op with similar objectives, 1¼ ac personal space. See last *Grass Roots*. $20,000. Ph: Greg, 02-6653-4601, Tony 02-6566-0890.

LITTLE PROMISED LAND COMMUNITY. We are a group of Bible commandment-keeping Christians who don't like the way the world has mostly forgotten the beautiful virtues of life: honesty, loyalty, true love, meekness, humility, tenderness, truth, obedience, duty & loving kindness. There is at present a small but growing number of people who want to live by these values, who are looking for similar-minded people to be with. Here in Tasmania, we are in the 'pioneer stage' of forming a community on 200 acres. We have called our community the Little Promised Land Community, & would like to hear from others, both individuals & families, who want to dwell in unity with the law of God as the basis for community life. Ph: 03-6297-6124 or write to: E. Morris, 'Little Promised Land', GPO Box 1926, HOBART, Tas 7001. Email: littlepromisedland@hotmail.com Website: www.littlepromisedland.com (Please note: Our website was temporarily taken over by an offensive US site for a month. This has now been rectified – and we're very sorry for any offence this may have caused.)

All ads on these pages are accepted at the discretion of the publishers.

GRASSIFIEDS

COMMUNITIES/SHARES

SHARE WITH HOUSE in estab MO community of four households, 140 ac, 35 mins from Bega. Organic garden, orchard, poultry, milking goats, beef cattle. VCA, perm crk & forest. School bus to front gate. Option to rent before buying. Approx $120,000. Ph: 02-6493-2032 or 02-6493-2109.

FOR SALE

SOLAR POWER INVERTER (Latronics), 24V to 240V, 2.5 KVA. 2 x 85 amphour batteries & leads. 1 x 24V trickle charger. All new – cost $4000, sell $2500. Ph: 0418-790-680.

'GRASS ROOTS' MAGAZINES, also *Earth Builders Companion*, *Bumper Book*, *Early Years*. Ph: 07-5484-0084.

'GRASS ROOTS' MAGAZINES – 1 to 155. Covers protected & magazine holders (2). $400. Ph: 03-9553-2272 after 5pm.

'GRASS ROOTS' – nos 9, 14 – 24, 26 – 36, 2 x 33, 43, 57, 59, 66. *Vegie Gardeners Companion*, *Bumper Book*, *Early Years* and EG 22/23. $150. Ph: 0418-125-207.

'GRASS ROOTS' – 45 & 48 & 50, 52 – 73, 75 – 88, 90 – 112, 119 – 153, 155 – 157. 103 altogether. $309. Special lot price $206. Ph: Dave, 08-9472-0656.

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PLACING AN AD?
See page 75 for details

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www.users.bigpond.com/goldenbeetlebooks/

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CALENDAR EVENTS

SCHOOL FAIR AND OPEN DAY, Little Yarra Steiner School, Little Yarra Rd, YARRA JUNCTION, Yarra Valley, Victoria (Melway Map 288 H11). Sunday 26 October, 2003, 10am – 4pm. For any enquiries ph: 03-5967-1953 or email: office@lyss.vic.edu.au
2003 EJ BRADY SHORT STORY WRITING competition is a part of our spring celebration, Forests & Flowers, the first weekend in November. Contact Mallacoota Arts Council Inc, PO Box 201 MALLACOOTA 3892 for details & an entry form.
RARE BREEDS: keep 8 and 9 November free to attend the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia annual fundraiser at Macclesfield, Vic. See rare pigs, sheep, horses and poultry and listen to a range of speakers. More details next GR or contact Secretary RBTA, Lot 20, Mt Blackwood Rd, MYRNIONG 3341. SAE please.

LATE GRASSIFIEDS

URGENT HELP REQUIRED for native Australian waterbirds: The Coalition Against Duck Shooting's 18-year campaign to permanently ban duck shooting in Victoria is at a critical stage and urgently seeks your help. It is imperative that the Premier now receives as many individual letters from Victorians as possible to maximise the chance that recreational shooting of native waterbirds in Victoria will be stopped. Please write to Premier Steve Bracks, Treasury Pce, MELBOURNE 3002. If you want to help save native waterbirds please email: boar02@yahoo.com.au or ph: 0414-816-509 for details. A form letter is avail.
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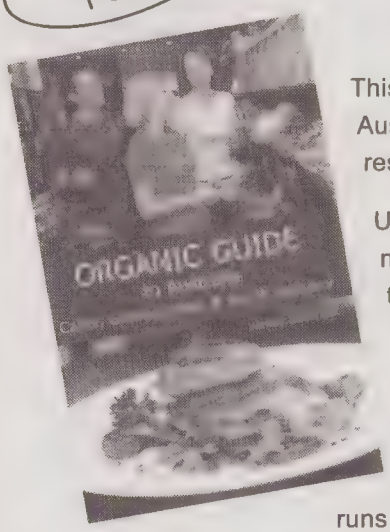

This indispensable guide to finding delicious, healthy food throughout Australia has a comprehensive listing of organic and biodynamic cafés, restaurants, retailers and home delivery services.

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See page 82 to order

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